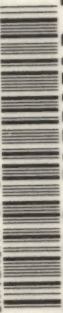


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DIVINE CHARITY:

ITS NATURE AND NECESSITY

*Presented to the Theological Faculty
of St Patrick's College, Maynooth
as a thesis for the Degree of Doctor*

BY

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PREFACE.

THE student of the treatise on the Theological Virtues will not have failed to notice that in their dissertations on the virtue of charity most theologians seem to convey the impression that an act of the virtue is extremely difficult. That such cannot really be the case will, however, be evident from the consideration that acts of charity are required from the ordinary man very frequently during life, and it is not to be supposed that he must need any extraordinary graces to fulfil so important an obligation.

The following pages, therefore, are an attempt to demonstrate that the practice of charity is easy and within the reach of all, by showing that the most commonly accepted theory of the nature of the virtue is open to considerable difficulty, and, even in the hands of its own supporters, is rarely applicable to real life. Various considerations will, it is hoped, point to the conclusion that an act of love of God as *our* supreme good and last end, generally called an act of love of concupiscence, is in reality an act of perfect charity. This conclusion seems to be forcing itself upon many modern theologians, almost against their will, but they are compelled to recognise that it is more truly a testimony to

the infinite mercy of God than the ordinarily accepted notion of 'absolute' love.

Mortal sin derives its essential malice, according to St. Thomas and most Moral theologians, from the fact that it averts the sinner from his last end for ever. We have the same authority for saying that all mortal sins are directly opposed to divine charity, a position which it would seem impossible to maintain on any but the theory suggested here. Moreover, the nature of theological hope will determine to a large extent what view we are to adopt as to the nature of charity. And if it be once shown, as is here attempted, that hope is not formally a love of concupiscence of God, one of the greatest difficulties will be removed from our way. For it must then follow that either there are four theological virtues, which will not be readily admitted, or that love of divine concupiscence is in reality an act of charity. The necessary condition for supernatural merit, that the act performed must in some way be directed to our last end, will provide a further indication in favour of the same conclusion.

Perfect contrition must be elicited from the motive of charity. Now, the many variations in our teaching with regard to perfect contrition are in themselves, it seems to me, sufficient evidence of some defect in our way of conceiving what contrition really is. This is a problem fraught with unusual difficulty, and what will

be said in reference to it is not meant in any way as an attempt to completely overcome it. Neither is it my purpose to cast any reflexion on the practical application, by any particular school of preachers or confessors, of Catholic teaching to Catholic life; for I am firmly convinced, from whatever study I have made of the question, that, no matter how they may differ in theory, they are at one in their dealings with human souls. Otherwise one could scarcely understand the easy tolerance of the Church in allowing so many and such different views to live and flourish. That very divergent, and what would seem diametrically opposed, views on the character of the contrition required in Confession have been actually tolerated by the Church, does not, I believe, stamp any, or all, of these with the seal of her authority. For she is well aware that the souls of her children are safe in the care of her rival schools of theologians, and her approval, or toleration, of their theories is not at all a consequence of her approval of their practice. Hence, what has been written on this matter is put forward with the full consciousness that it is open to very serious difficulties—it would be the height of presumption to claim success where the united forces of all the great theologians have achieved so little. I only venture to suggest that the presence of the difficulty may be due in large measure to incorrect theories of divine charity and contrition.

In speaking of love of concupiscence as being an act of perfect charity, it is difficult to avoid being misunderstood. The word *concupiscence* sounds ill ; it is unfortunate, but it cannot be helped. Scholastic phraseology is not easily converted into English equivalents. Yet I hope that my meaning will not be altogether missed by those to whom the equation of love of concupiscence with charity may come as a surprise, even though it may claim the support of some of our most representative theologians. At the same time it should be borne in mind that the thesis, as a whole, is put forward on its own merits, and merely by way of suggestion.

* * * * *

There is scarcely a point touched upon in this brief essay that does not demand more ample treatment, but owing to the abnormal conditions which prevail, it must now appear in a much shorter form than had been originally intended.

P. O'N.

MAYNOOTH, *June*, 1918.

DIVINE CHARITY.

CHAPTER I.

THE NECESSITY OF CHARITY.

IN the whole of the inspired writings there is scarcely anything more truly sublime than the glorious eulogy of charity in St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians : " If I speak with the tongues of men, and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy, and should know all mysteries, and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." ¹ The Apostle had just been speaking of the wealth of charisms with which the Holy Ghost had endowed the infant Church at Corinth, gifts all to be eagerly striven for, but all inferior to the " more excellent way " of divine charity. In fact, be these charisms ever so many or so powerful, they are but empty, unprofitable ornaments, availing their possessor nothing to eternal life, if their exercise be not inspired by charity.

¹ I. Cor. xiii., 1-3.

The basis of this teaching of St. Paul is the compendium of Christian law enunciated by Christ in answer to a Pharisee's question : " Master, which is the greatest commandment in the law ? Jesus said to him : Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment." ² There can be no mistaking the meaning of these words, and theologians are accordingly unanimous in holding that the precept of charity is of strict obligation. It is true that this commandment is not formally contained in the decalogue ; neither are the commandments concerning the other theological virtues of faith and hope. These special precepts are rather to be regarded in the light of what have been called " preambles to the law," ³ without which the law itself could not exist at all. There can be no doubt that the precept of charity is a special precept, distinct altogether from any, or all, of the commandments, ⁴ and, moreover, that it implies something more than the mere negative command to abstain from any action by which the love of God is forfeited ; that in fact its fulfilment requires an explicit and formal act of the love of God.

So much, at least, can be gathered from the testimony of the Scriptures. It is confirmed,

² Matt. xxii., 36-38 ; Mk. xii., 28-30.

³ St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.* 22^{ae}, q. 16, a. 1 ; q. 22, a. 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, q. 44, a. 1.

and to some extent defined, by the authoritative teaching of the Church, voiced in the condemnation of certain erroneous propositions. The following proposition was declared heretical and condemned by Alexander VIII. in 1690 : " Objective goodness consists in the conformity of an object with rational nature ; formal goodness in the conformity of an act with the rule of morals. For this it is sufficient that a moral act should tend to the last end interpretatively. Wherefore *a person is not bound to love* either at the beginning or during the course of his moral life." ⁵ This proposition merely repeated the error already condemned by Alexander VII. in 1665, and enunciated thus : " At no time of his life is a person bound to make an act of faith, hope, or charity, by reason of the divine precepts specially relating to these virtues." ⁶ From which it follows that there is a positive obligation to elicit a formal act of divine love, and this obligation is further defined by the condemnation by Innocent XI. in 1679 of these propositions : " We hesitate to condemn the teaching that it would not be a mortal sin to have elicited an act of charity only once during life." " It is probable that the obligation of charity towards God does not strictly bind *per se* even

⁵ " Bonitas obiectiva consistit in convenientia obiecti cum natura rationali ; formalis vero in conformitate actus cum regula morum. Ad hoc sufficit ut actus moralis tendat in finem ultimum interpretative : hinc *homo non tenetur amare* neque in principio neque in decursu vite sue moralis." Denzinger, *Enchiridion*, 11th Ed., n. 1289.

⁶ " Homo nullo unquam vite sue tempore tenetur elicere actum fidei, spei, et caritatis, ex vi praeceptorum divinorum ad eas virtutes pertinentium " Denz., n. 1101.

every five years.” “The obligation exists only when we are bound to become justified, and have no other means to secure justification.”⁷

Thus we find that according to Catholic teaching we are bound to make an explicit act of charity not merely once, but several times during life, and that once every five years is not to be regarded as sufficient. The obligation, we gather in addition, arises from the special precept of charity, and not, therefore, *per accidens*, in so far as an act of charity would be necessary to fulfil some other precept.

It is very difficult to define more precisely than this the extent of the obligation, and our theologians refer to it in the vaguest terms. Suarez, for instance, who in point of precision is second to none, merely ventures to say that “it is fitting that love of God, for whom man was created, and who is the last end of our actions, should be elicited not merely once or twice in a whole lifetime. Hence one who omits this act of love for several years sins against the precept; but as to when this time would be reached is a matter for prudent judgment.”⁸

⁷ An peccet mortaliter, qui actum dilectionis Dei semel tantum in vita eliceret, condemnare non audemus.

Probabile est, ne singulis quidem quinquenniis per se obligare praeceptum caritatis erga Deum.

Tunc solum obligat, quando tenemur iustificari, et non habemus aliam viam, qua iustificari possumus. Denz., nn. 1155-57.

⁸ Est enim consentaneum, ut Dei amor, propter quem creatus est homo, et qui est ultimus finis actionum, non semel tantum ac iterum in tota vita habeatur. Quare qui per multos annos non exercet hunc amorem, delinquit contra hoc praeceptum. *De Caritate*, Disp. v., Sect. iii., n. 4.

Most writers, however, go a little further, and are of opinion that there is an obligation to make a formal act of charity at the beginning of one's moral life, that is to say, when the powers of reason can clearly discern between right and wrong in relation to God. It is not possible to determine with any degree of accuracy when the moral consciousness becomes thus sufficiently developed, but at all events, when this stage is reached, St. Thomas teaches that the positive obligation then arises of directing one's whole moral life towards the last end, and this, as we shall see later, is the same as saying that one must make an act of charity.⁹ This reasoning, however, presupposes that everyone who attains the use of reason must have a sufficient knowledge of God as the last end, thereby precluding the possibility of atheism, even for a short period of life. This makes it somewhat curious for Suarez to deny the existence of the obligation stated by St. Thomas.¹⁰

Whatever may be said of the teaching of St. Thomas on this matter, and it is not without its difficulties, there is a much more considerable weight of authority for the doctrine that the precept of charity binds strictly at the moment

⁹ "Cum vero usum rationis (quis) habere incoeperit, non omnino excusatur a culpa venialis et mortalis peccati; sed primum quod tunc homini cogitandum occurrit, est deliberare de se ipso. Et si quidem seipsum ordinaverit ad debitum finem, per gratiam consequetur remissionem originalis peccati; si vero non ordinet seipsum ad debitum finem, secundum quod in illa aetate est capax discretionis, peccabit mortaliter, non faciens quod in se est." *Summa Theol.*, 12^{ae}, q. 89, a. 6,

¹⁰ Suarez, *De bon. et mal. hum. actuum*, Disp. vi., Sect. i., n. 12.

of death, in view of the supreme importance of availing of certain means of salvation. Of course, the "moment of death" may be taken for this purpose in a somewhat loose sense, and it would seem difficult to urge the obligation in the case of one who had been accustomed to make acts of charity very frequently during life, and who does not at the last need to be reconciled with God.¹¹ What is more interesting to note is the contention of so many theologians that the reception of the Sacrament of Penance with attrition does not remove the obligation of the penitent *in articulo mortis* to make an act of perfect charity. This is the view of Lacroix, expressed in unmistakable terms.¹² And St. Alphonsus, such a safe guide in practical matters, while admitting as probable the view of De Lugo, Laymann, and many others, that *in articulo mortis* there is no obligation of perfect contrition, when the Sacrament has been received with attrition, nevertheless holds with Suarez that in practice the safer course is to be followed.¹³ In modern text-books, however, this teaching of St. Alphonsus is not generally

¹¹ Cf. De Lugo, *De Poenit.*, Disp. vii., Sect. xiii., n. 276.

¹² Tenendum est tamen contra multos . . . praecepto charitatis pro articulo mortis non satisfieri per sacramentum Poenitentiae susceptum cum attritione cognita, quia reipsa perfecte amandus est Deus in fine vitae, sacramentum autem cum attritione non est amor qualis requiritur. *Theol. Mor.*, Tom. i., Lib. ii., n. 142.

¹³ Utraque sententia est probabilis, sed prima omnino est consulenda (*i.e.*, the opinion requiring contrition), cum agatur de summo salutis negotio, cuius periculum est irreparabile. Imo dico esse omnino sequendam ab eo qui esset in actuali articulo mortis: tunc enim quisque tenetur elicere actum caritatis . . . cui nemo potest satisfacere, si occurrente memoria peccati, ex eodem caritatis motivo peccatum non detestetur. *Theol. Mor.*, Lib. vi., Tract iv., n. 437.

adopted, the contention being that the reception of Penance with attrition is, if not actually, at least equivalently an act of charity. But a fuller discussion of these matters must be reserved for a subsequent chapter.

While it is, therefore, true that the virtue of charity fills an all-important rôle in leading man to his last end, it may be well to direct attention to a possible misunderstanding. It is the view of a very large number of writers on Ethics and Moral Theology that the ultimate criterion of morality of an act is to be found in its reference to the last end. An act which leads to the last end is good, an act which averts from it is bad. Now we shall see later on ¹⁴ that, according to the teaching of St. Thomas, acts are directed to the last end by charity. Hence it would immediately follow that no act can be good unless it be performed from the motive of charity—and we should find ourselves in the position of the Jansenists, who contended, on these very grounds, that “without charity there is no true obedience to the law.” ¹⁵ This Jansenistic error is due to an altogether false interpretation of many passages in the writings of St. Thomas, of which the following may be taken as typical: “It is to be observed that this law of divine love should be the rule of all human acts. For as we see in works of art that a thing is said to be good and

¹⁴ p. 49.

¹⁵ Denz., n. 1016.

right when it agrees with a standard, so a human act is right and virtuous when it is in harmony with the rule of divine love ; when, however, it is in discord with this rule, it is neither good nor right nor perfect. Now, in order that human acts should be good, they must conform to the rule of divine love.”¹⁶

Reading such passages as these in connexion with so many others in which St. Thomas seems to consider reference to the last end as of the essence of morality,¹⁷ the conclusion would be unavoidable that there can be no good without charity. It does not, however, require a very thorough knowledge of the works of the Angelic Doctor to realize that it would be entirely unwarrantable to attribute any such teaching to him, for the very simple reason that in those places so often referred to as proving that the morality of acts consists essentially in their reference to the last end, we actually find that this question is not the one at issue at all, but another question concerning the most complete measure of goodness which an act may possess, in order that it may be meritorious of eternal life. Nothing would be easier than to quote passages

¹⁶ Sciendum quod haec lex (sc. divini amoris) debet esse regula omnium actuum humanorum. Sicut enim videmus in artificialibus quod unumquodque opus tunc bonum et rectum dicitur quando regulae coaequatur ; sic etiam quodlibet humanum opus rectum est et virtuosum quando regulae divinae dilectionis concordat ; quando vero discordat ab hac regula, non est bonum nec rectum nec perfectum. Ad hoc autem quod actus humani boni reddantur, oportet quod regulae divinae dilectionis concordent. St. Thomas, *Opusc.* iii., *In Duo Praecept. Charit.*, etc.

¹⁷ Cf. *Summ. Theol.* 12^{ae}, q. 1, a. 6 ; q. 94, a. 2.

in proof of this fact, but the following should suffice to make the matter clear beyond all doubt :
 " Every act, in so far as it is an act, has some essential goodness, in the sense that all being is good ; but in some acts there is superadded a goodness by reason of the proportion of the act to its fitting object, and in this sense an act is said to be good generically ; further, by reason of the due proportion of its circumstances an act is said to be circumstantially good (*bonum ex circumstantia*), and so on, until we reach the final measure of goodness of which a human act is susceptible, which consists in its relation to the last end by the habit of grace or charity ; and, therefore, the act of those who have not grace or charity is not good in this latter sense, *and this is the goodness on account of which an act is meritorious*. But though the latter kind of goodness be lacking, the former still remains, so that even though the acts of infidels lack that goodness on account of which they may be meritorious, there yet remains another goodness."¹⁸

¹⁸ "Omnis actus, in quantum est actus, habet quamdam essentialē bonitatem, secundum quod omne ens bonum est ; sed in aliquibus actibus superadditur quaedam bonitas ex proportionē actus ad debitum obiectum, et secundum hoc dicitur actus bonus ex genere ; et ulterius ex debita commensuratione circumstantiarum dicitur bonus ex circumstantia ; et sic deinceps, quousque perveniatur ad ultimam bonitatem, cuius humanus actus est susceptivus, quae est ex ordine in finem ultimum per habitum gratiae et caritatis : et ideo actus illorum, qui gratiam et caritatem non habent, hoc modo bonus esse non potest : et haec est bonitas secundum quam actus meritorius dicitur. Sed subtracto posteriori, nihilominus remanet prius unde quamvis ab infidelium actibus subtrahatur ista bonitas, secundum quam actus meritorius dicitur, remanet tamen bonitas alia vel virtutis politicae, vel ex circumstantia, vel ex genere." *In II. Sent.*, Dist. 41, q. 1, a. 2. Cf. *Summ. Theol.* 12^{ae}, q. 18, a. 4 ; q. 20, a. 1 ; *Summ. Contr. Gent.*, Lib. iii., Cap. 129.

If it be therefore admitted, and it is difficult to see how to avoid the admission, that acts can be morally good or bad apart from their reference by the agent to his last end, the rôle of charity becomes all the more important, because its obligation will be more positive and explicit. For if, as we shall see, acts must be referred to the last end in order to possess the full measure of goodness which is required for divine merit,¹⁹ and if their moral goodness is prior to, and independent of, this reference, the reference itself appears as a distinct act, in the teaching of St. Thomas, an act of charity.²⁰

It is needless to labour the point that love of charity is a precept of the very first importance, binding every individual very frequently during life.²¹ The conclusion should, therefore, be obvious that an act of the virtue is not difficult. Since it is commanded, it must be easy, for it would be strange if God, who wills the salvation of all, should provide all with a means necessary for salvation which all could not easily employ. No one is lost except through his own fault. Hence we find preachers and writers of ascetic

¹⁹ Ch. iv., *infra*.

²⁰ The obligation of referring our acts to the last end and the obligation of eliciting an act of charity are, according to St. Thomas, one and the same :—"Praeceptum caritatis implere homo non potest, nisi etiam omnia referantur in Deum" (12^{ae}, q. 100, a. 10, ad 2^m). "Si quaeratur, quando oporteat actum referre in finem ultimum, hoc nihil aliud est quam quaerere, quando oportet habitum caritatis exire in actum : quia quando cumque habitus caritatis in actum exit, fit ordinatio totius hominis in finem ultimum, et per consequens omnium eorum, quae in ipsum ordinantur ut bona sibi." (II., Dist. 40, q. 1, a. 5, ad 6^m).

²¹ St. Alphonsus holds that an act of charity should be elicited at least once a month. *Theol. Mor.*, Tom. ii., Lib. ii., n. 8.

Theology, who, we may assume, reflect the universal feeling of the faithful, teaching without hesitation that an act of perfect contrition, which implies an act of perfect love of God, is within the reach of even the most hardened sinner. No doubt, there is a tendency to magnify the difficulty of contrition or charity in the attempt so often made to extol the mercy of God in being satisfied with less perfect sorrow in the Sacrament of Penance—and the Catechism of the Council of Trent would seem to lend its authority to this severe doctrine. For we read in the Catechism that contrition, though it does indeed blot out sin, “must be so intense, so ardent, so vehement, as to bear a proportion to the magnitude of the crimes which it effaces. *This is a degree of contrition which few reach*, and hence through perfect contrition alone very few indeed could hope to obtain the pardon of their sins.”²² Theologians, however, have no hesitation in regarding this rigorous doctrine as a mere theological opinion, and not as the common Catholic teaching.²³ Were it really true, the lot of those outside the Church would be hard indeed; and even within the Church, for well nigh twelve hundred years perfect contrition was believed to be necessary for remission of sin even with the Sacrament of Penance. If but

²² Eng. trans. by Donovan, p. 271.

²³ See an article by Fr. Slater, S.J., “*Is an Act of Contrition difficult?*” in I. E. Record, 5th series, Vol. 4, p. 225.

few can reach this perfect contrition, have the majority of these countless souls been lost? Common sense will not entertain the notion.

Hence theologians are now agreed that the act of charity is, in fact, easily elicited—so easy is it, one says, that we may have perfect contrition, even without knowing it or thinking of it, “for example, while devoutly hearing Mass, while making the Stations of the Cross, while piously contemplating a crucifix or a picture of the Sacred Heart, while listening to a sermon, and so forth.”²⁴ St. Thomas says that the very first petition in the Lord’s Prayer is a perfect act of charity,²⁵ and St. Alphonsus writes that the precept of divine love is fulfilled by all meritorious works performed with a view to pleasing God, such as almsgiving, fasting, and the like.²⁶ Strangely enough, Billuart, who adheres to the rigorous view, flavouring of Jansenism, that perfect charity is but rarely and with difficulty attained, takes refuge in the consoling thought that the reception of the Sacrament with attrition, being an acceptance of grace and of friendship with God on the part of the sinner, is equivalent to an act of charity.²⁷ It should, however, be remembered that, while Billuart strongly insists on the distinction between perfect contrition and

²⁴ Cf. *Perfect Contrition*, by Rev. J. Von den Driesch, Eng. trans. by Fr. Slater, S.J., p. 15.

²⁵ 22^{ae}, q. 83, a. 9.

²⁶ *Theol. Mor.*, Tom. i., Lib. ii., n. 8. Cf. Lacroix, *Theol. Mor.*, Tom. i. Lib. ii., n. 143.

²⁷ *De Poenit.*, Dissert. iv., Art. vii., § ii.

attrition, he requires for attrition the motive of love of benevolence of God. This is but one of the many examples which might be adduced to show how difficult it is to maintain a consistent theory of divine charity which will fit in with the doctrine of Penance.

In view of the foregoing considerations, on the necessity of charity and on the consequent facility with which the act may be elicited, the reader will be prepared to call in question the teaching found in so many of our treatises on the Theological Virtues, the teaching, namely, that in making an act of charity we must abstract altogether from God's goodness to us, viewing him in the light of the absolute good in himself. It would be hard to conceive how the ordinary untrained mind could go through this abstractive process, possible, if at all, seemingly only to those who have spent some time at the study of philosophy. But God requires the love of all, of the humble peasant as well as of the learned, and he could not, consistently with his infinite mercy, demand what is well-nigh impossible.²⁸ With these preliminaries in mind, the chapters which follow, it is hoped, will strengthen the suspicion already aroused, and lead to a conclusion which may seem to be better suited to the limitations of man, and more conformable to the supreme goodness of God.

²⁸ At least for some, without special grace.

CHAPTER II.

THE NATURE OF MORTAL SIN.

SIN in general is defined by Lehmkuhl as "opposition of the created will to the command of the divine will."¹ Before, however, this formal opposal of the will of God is taken into account, the sinful act derives a certain malice from its opposition to the dictates of right reason, which is aware of an order of right and wrong antecedently to, and, moreover, independently of, any reflections on the existence of a superior who has established that order.²

Theologians find in sin a multiplicity of aspects under which it is sinful. Lehmkuhl enumerates a host of them. The sinner, he says,³ sins against rational nature ; against the common good of the human race ; and thirdly, against God. This third aspect is that which completes the malice of sin, and constitutes it a theological transgression. The offence against God has in itself a manifold malice. It is a violation of obedience ; a violation of justice ; a sin of irreligion ; an act of ingratitude ; an aversion from the last end, and thus against love of concupiscence of God, as well as against love of charity.

There is no doubt that in a mortal sin all these

¹ *Theol. Mor.* i., n. 320.

² See Lehm. *Ibid.*, n. 322.

³ *I.*, nn. 324 sqq.

species of malice may be found, on consideration. It is not contended that the sinner embraces them all, thus committing many sins ; but advertence to any one of them would be sufficient to constitute a grave sin.

When, however, we come to consider in what precisely consists the formal malice of mortal sin, we shall be obliged to reduce all the aspects enumerated to one common denominator. If in our act we do not embrace this precise aspect which constitutes the essence of mortal sin, that act of ours will not be followed for us with the consequences of grave guilt, though materially it be sufficiently serious to incur them all.

Man is destined by God for the enjoyment of the divine vision for ever, and he is set here in this world to work out his salvation, performing all his actions with a view to that end, at least in the sense that he should do nothing to deprive him of it. Now, while man succeeds in maintaining such relations with God that he still tends to his last end, he cannot be said to be in mortal sin. Hence we find that St. Thomas, in analysing the distinction between mortal and venial sin, ultimately reduces it to this, that by mortal sin man averts from his last end, while by venial he does not. It is easy to give numerous quotations. The following will be sufficient :—"The principle of the whole moral order is the last end. . . . Hence when the soul by sin averts from its last end, God, to whom it

is united by charity, that sin is mortal.”⁴ “In every mortal sin the principal aspect of evil and the gravity (of the offence) are derived from the fact that it is an aversion from God ; for if there could be a conversion to a changeable good without aversion from God, although it would be inordinate, it would not be a mortal sin.”⁵ From this it would follow that, though an act which is materially of grave malice be committed, without, however, any consideration of its effect of separating the sinner from his last end for ever, such an act will not be a mortal sin. That is to say, the sinner must, at least virtually, have deliberately chosen the finite good in preference to the infinite, having, so to speak, weighed them both in the balance of his judgment, before he can be said to have sinned mortally.⁶ It will not be sufficient for him to know that his act is a serious violation of the moral order, injurious to the common good, or contrary to the rights of an individual. He must embrace it as his choice between the created, limited good and the uncreated, infinite good which is the end of all. So Suarez understands the teaching of St. Thomas, as is clear from the following passage :—“The deformity of mortal

⁴ “Principium autem totius ordinis in moralibus est finis ultimus Unde, quando anima deordinatur per peccatum usque ad aversionem ab ultimo fine, scilicet Deo, cui unitur per caritatem, tunc est peccatum mortale.” *Summ. Theol.* 12^{ae}, q. 72, a. 5.

⁵ “In quolibet peccato mortali principalis ratio mali et gravitas est ex hoc quod avertit se a Deo ; si enim posset esse conversio ad bonum commutabile sine aversione a Deo, quamvis esset inordinata, non esset peccatum mortale.” *Summ. Theol.*, 22^{ae}, q. 20, a. 3.

⁶ Cf. MacDonald, *Principles of Moral Science*, p 139.

sin consists in this, that virtually and morally the sinner prefers the creature to God.”⁷ Thus, although each individual mortal sin has a special malice from its own particular object, they all have this in common, that they avert the sinner from his last end. “Mortal sin, as such, is constituted by a special deformity which such an act possesses in relation to God, the last end, which is almost always distinct from the malice derived from the object of the act.”⁸ This teaching suggests the following difficulty to Suarez:—“It may be that one who knows that homicide is a moral evil, even contrary to charity towards the neighbour, is invincibly ignorant of its being opposed to God or the last end; either because it is not *per se* known that bad acts are against God, or because one may be invincibly ignorant that killing is against the last end, because one who kills another in such a case neither formally nor virtually wishes to avert from the last end. The conclusion seems absurd: First, because for mortal sin it suffices to transgress what is known to be the law of nature, and especially to sin against charity towards the neighbour. Secondly, because otherwise all nations who know not God, or are not aware that he is

⁷ “Mortalis peccati deformitas in hoc consistit, quod per illud virtualiter et moraliter plus amat peccator creaturam quam Deum.” *De Vitiis et Peccatis*, Disp. ii., Sect. i., n. 3.

⁸ “Respondes tamen peccatum mortale, ut sic, constitui ex speciali quadam deformitate, quam talis actus habet in ordine ad Deum ut ultimum finem, quae fere semper distincta est a malitia, quam habet actus ex obiecto.” *Ibid.*, Sect. ii., n. 2.

offended by our acts, would not commit mortal sins ; they would not therefore be punished eternally for their evil acts.”⁹ The answer, notwithstanding the absurdities, is as follows :—
 “ Granted such ignorance, the act of such a man possesses all the moral malice arising from the evil object which is known, but not the particular deordination and wickedness which, as we have said, constitutes the malice of mortal sin.”¹⁰

It is most important to bear this doctrine in mind in connexion with the character of the sorrow required for the remission of sin. It is held by a great many able theologians that, absolutely speaking, God could remit mortal sin without any act of retractation on the sinner’s part. Should the reader desire to investigate this rather unpractical matter, he will find it treated at considerable length by Suarez.¹¹ However this may be, it is at all events quite certain that, in the established order of things, the sinner is required to retract whatever form of malice he embraced before he will receive pardon. Hence if a person commits what is objectively a grave sin, without, however, advertent to its full malice, or considering that it implies separation from God for ever, his repentance will have to extend only

⁹ Ibid., n. 5.

¹⁰ “ Dicendum videtur, posita illa ignorantia, actum illius hominis habere totam illam malitiam moralem, quae nata est oriri ex obiecto pravo cognito, non tamen illam propriam deordinationem et pravitatem, quam proprie constituere diximus peccatum mortale.” Ibid., n. 7.
Cf. St. Thomas, Summ. Theol., 22^{ae}, q. 20, a. 3, quoted p. 16.

¹¹ *De Poenitentia*, Disp. ix., Sect. iv.

to an act which is the formal opposite of that by which he sinned. A man who steals, let us say, some considerable amount of money in circumstances which lead him to believe that it is merely a sin of injustice against his neighbour, will be forgiven that sin by an efficacious act of repentance for that injustice, even though he never considers his act in relation to God. But if he embraces the act of theft with the full consciousness that it is a grievous sin against God, separating him for ever from his last end, his act of repentance must be such as will re-adjust his relations with God ; he must come back by the path he went, retracing every step of the journey. The sin which is an abandonment of his last end must be repented by an act of re-attachment to it.

Now we have seen that aversion from the last end is an act of hatred of God, directly opposed to charity, and it follows, therefore, from what has just been said, that this is the formal malice of every mortal sin. It is easy to support this statement by authorities. St. Thomas says : "Charity can in nowise co-exist with mortal sin, as is evident from the consideration that every mortal sin is directly opposed to charity. For when a person prefers one thing to another, that which is preferred is loved more. . . . Now, a person commits mortal sin by preferring some thing to living according to God and inhering in him. Hence it is clear that whoever sins mortally thereby loves some other good more

than God. For if he loved God more, he would rather live according to God than acquire any temporal good whatsoever. Now, it is of the nature of charity that God be loved above all things, as appears from what has been said; hence every mortal sin is opposed to charity.”¹² Suarez, too, endorses this teaching. We have already found him holding that mortal sin, as such, has a general malice apart from the particular object of the individual sinful act—that there is one common species of deordination common to murder, injustice, blasphemy, impurity, and the rest. They are all opposed to charity. “If it be asked,” he says, “in what *genus* and *species* is to be placed this precise deordination which constitutes mortal sin, I reply that, according to the view of the Saints and of St. Thomas, already discussed, mortal sin as such is opposed to charity, and hence this deordination must be specified as hatred of God.”¹³ This teaching of Suarez is all the more noteworthy in view of the fact that he does not agree with St. Thomas that acts must be directed to the last end by charity.¹⁴ His views in these two contexts do not seem altogether consistent; yet, if there were question of a withdrawal from one position in favour of the other,

¹² *Quaest. Disp. De Caritate*, a. 6; cf. also 22^{ae}, q. 24, a. 12.

¹³ “Quaeret aliquis, in quo genere et specie malitiae sit haec propria deformitas, quae peccatum mortale constituit. Respondeo ex sententia Sanctorum et D. Thomae, supra tractata, peccatum mortale ut sic, contrarium esse charitati, atque adeo deformitatem hanc ad speciem malitiae odii Dei esse revocandam.” *De Vitiis et Peccatis*, Disp. ii., Sect. ii., n. 3.

¹⁴ See, however, p. 60, *infra*.

there can be little doubt that he would choose to regard his attitude on the present question as fundamental, and that he would definitely adhere to it.

Billuart, treating of the formal and primary distinction between mortal and venial sins, rejects a number of aspects of difference as not being really fundamental, and regards some others as being only verbally distinct, but agreeing in fact. "As regards the other points of difference," he writes, "they seem to differ merely in words, but in fact to agree. For to be against the end of a law, to be out of order with regard to the end, to be averted from the last end, to despise the friendship of God, to be opposed to grace and charity, are expressions which signify the same thing under different concepts and forms ; so that, at least in my opinion, it is the same to say that the constitutive criterion of mortal sin, and its formal and primary difference from venial, consists in this, that mortal sin is either completely against a law, or that it averts from the last end, or that it is a contempt for the friendship of God, or that it is opposed to grace and charity."¹⁵ He can, therefore, be taken to agree with the doctrine that has been put forward. Lehmkuhl, too, may be quoted to the same effect. He declares that sin derives a formal malice from its opposition to man's last end.. The sinner rejects God, thus sinning against love of concupiscence. Further,

¹⁵ *De Passionibus et Virtutibus*, Diss. viii., Art. ii.

he sins against his last end in the absolute sense, for, loosing the bond of friendship with God, he sins against the love of charity.¹⁶

So far we have seen—(a) that mortal sin is constituted as such by the fact that it is an aversion from God, (b) who is our last end and final good, and (c) that the malice consists in a violation of divine charity.

Now, if charity be understood, as it is most commonly understood, to be absolute love of God, as distinct from love of God as our supreme good, it is not easy to see why every mortal sin should be directly opposed to it. Is not the act of the sinner, whereby he elects, in sinning, to separate himself from God, an act of concupiscence, or relative hatred of God? He regards this finite good as more agreeable for the time than the possession of the infinite good, and places his last end in it for ever. (This is essential to mortal sin, and the justification of the infliction of eternal punishment.) There is, indeed, a sense in which his act of aversion from, or hatred of, God is truly absolute, for it is a final determination, a severance for ever, the choice of a finite rather than an infinite last end, and so, as far as the sinner is concerned, an absolute rupture.

A considerable body of theologians regard theological hope as an act of concupiscence of the infinite good. St. Thomas may be quoted to this effect, although, as we shall see further on,

¹⁶ *Theol. Mor.*, i., nn. 328, 329.

his authority in this case is discounted by reason of the fact that he is quoted for every view advanced. Suarez and all his followers claim St. Thomas in favour of this position. At the same time, these same writers hold that after sanctifying grace is lost, hope remains. Now, if hope is a love of concupiscence of the infinite good, and if every mortal sin is opposed to this love of concupiscence, how can the virtue of hope remain in a soul that is in the state of sin? If it be replied to this, as it has been replied, that the sinner still hopes to attain his last end by subsequent repentance, we may well ask is this hope of his an act of a theological virtue. Does he not merely hope that he will regain theological hope?

In another chapter an attempt will be made to show that theological hope does not formally consist in love of concupiscence, but is really an act of trust or confidence in the promises of God. Enough has been said here, however, to lead to the conclusion that all sins against love of concupiscence are not sins against divine hope, while it is true that every act of aversion from our last end is an act of concupiscence. Moreover, we have seen our greatest theologians declare that every mortal sin is opposed to charity, from which we should conclude that a sin against love of concupiscence is a sin against charity, the further conclusion being then suggested, that love of concupiscence pertains to, if it be not identical with, love of charity. According to Lehmkuhl,

every mortal sin is opposed to both love of concupiscence and love of charity, for the sinner averts from his last end in both the relative and the absolute sense. It is worth while to quote him :

“ The relation of God as last end is already contained in other attributes, but the opposition of sin to God formally considered as the last end gives rise to a new form of malice, and this all the more grave by reason of the fact that God in his supreme goodness wished that in the beatific vision he should be our supernatural last end. Our every action, therefore, should be a preparation for and an approach to God whom we are to enjoy. But the sinner rests in some other thing, some creature, seeking therein his happiness ; wherefore he implicitly and interpretatively despises God as the end of his happiness, and by demerit falls away from God as *his* last end, sinning against love of concupiscence towards God.”

This love of concupiscence Lehmkuhl wishes us to understand as an act of the virtue of hope,¹⁷ and inferior to an act of charity. The sinner, however, not only sins against hope, but also against charity, by every mortal sin that he commits :

“ But the sinner offends against the last end even considered absolutely, since we are bound to pursue it by love of benevolence towards God. By this charity towards God, which, on account of our supernatural union with him, is a true friendship, all that is God's we make our own, and in turn

¹⁷ Ibid., n. 440.

we merge our whole selves in God. But the sinner dissolves this friendship, which requires such a union of affections that we should conform ourselves to God's will and his commands. Instead of an attitude of friendship, to which he should be impelled by as many motives as there are infinitely lovable perfections in God, he acts as an enemy of God, embracing what God holds in supreme hatred, sinning, therefore, against love of charity by *enmity* towards, and interpretatively by *hatred* of, God."

It is important to observe that these two species of sin, as Lehmkuhl will have it, sins against love of concupiscence and sins against love of charity, are both directly opposed to the love of the last end, the first to the relative, the second to the absolute love of it. How can it be contended by anyone that these two acts are distinct? What can be the possible meaning of a relative aversion from the last end? The sinner, if he is to commit a mortal sin at all, must have rejected God for ever. And surely is not his act of *relative* aversion quite as thorough in this respect as his act of *absolute* aversion? Every aversion is *absolute*, in the sense that it is final and irrevocable, as far as the sinner is concerned; and it is *relative*, in the sense that the sinner weighs two goods in the balance, choosing the finite for the infinite; one cannot convert *to* without averting *from*. The ultimate and fundamental malice is in the turning away from God.

Before departing from this aspect of the matter, it will not be without interest to refer to the teaching of our theological guides on the sins against charity. We shall not be far wrong in taking Lehmkuhl again as representative of the body.

We sin against charity, he says, first,¹⁸ by the omission of the act when there is an obligation to elicit it; secondly, by hatred of God, whether this be *odium abominationis* or *odium inimicitiae*; thirdly, by every mortal sin. In which teaching two points are worthy of attention.

In the first place, it is to be noted that *odium abominationis* and *odium inimicitiae* are both equally opposed to charity, the latter, though, in a more direct way, and the reason is that, although *odium abominationis* hates God in himself, it does not do so because God exists and is most perfect in himself, whereas this is precisely the formal motive of *odium inimicitiae*.¹⁹

Secondly, we are reminded that every mortal sin is opposed to charity, for "he who sins grievously, virtually, and interpretatively rejects God as his supreme good, thus sinning against the formal object of charity; every mortal sin, however, is not opposed to the formal object of faith or hope (God's supreme veracity and his helping power). And since charity consists in

¹⁸ *Theol. Mor.*, i., n. 456.

¹⁹ "Abominatio Deum quidem in se odio habet, at non quatenus Deus est et in se perfectissimus; inimicitia autem sub hac formali ratione Deum odio prosequitur." Ibid.

friendship between God and man, whoever gravely offends God on his part destroys this friendship.²⁰

Our author, therefore, would have us conclude that *odium abominationis*, hatred of God in a relative sense, which is to be found in every mortal sin, is not in all cases opposed to hope; yet he had previously declared that love of concupiscence, relative love of God, is an act of the virtue of hope,²¹ at one time distinguishing between absolute and relative love of God, at another seeming to identify them. We shall see as we go along if the difficulties may not be removed in a manner which will ensure both simplicity and consistency.

²⁰ "Qui graviter peccat, Deum ut *supremum bonum virtualiter et interpretative abicit*, adeoque formale obiectum caritatis laedit; non autem quovis peccato gravi obiectum formale fidei vel spei, veracitas Dei suprema eiusve virtus auxiliatrix, reicitur; (2) quia, cum caritas amicitia sit inter Deum et hominem, quilibet, qui graviter Deum offendit, ex parte sua hanc amicitiam solvit." Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., n. 440.

CHAPTER III.

HOPE.

IF there is any department of our Theology where opinion may boast an almost undisputed sway, little hampered by any authoritative teaching, it is surely the treatise on the virtue of hope. Not alone are the rival schools at variance with one another, but even within themselves they find agreement difficult, and for many views the unit of authority is the individual. The reader needs only to consult a number of our text-books for the definition of the virtue to convince himself of the truth of what a recent writer states, that the theories may be counted by scores.¹ However, from out the welter of conflicting opinions a few fairly well-defined sets of theories emerge clear, containing within them variants in the less important details.

To go fully into this extremely difficult question would require more study and space than can at present be devoted to it. The present treatment, however inadequate, is necessitated by the fact that, in the teaching on Charity, some special theory of the nature of divine hope is

¹ "La question du motif de l'espérance chrétienne a fait éclore quantité de théories ; c'est par vingtaines qu'il faudrait les compter !" *Dict. de Théol. Cath.*, Tom. v., Col. 633.

presupposed, and, accordingly, it is proposed not alone to indicate those views which seem to be untenable, but also to lay before the reader the theory which appears best in accord with the evidence available, and which will fit in most suitably with other portions of our theological system.

When investigating the nature of an act, we are wont to call to our aid the well-known axiom of the Schools: "*Actus specificatur ex obiecto formali proximo.*" The formal object of divine hope, then, is the aim of our inquiry, and, as has been said, we are able to distinguish a few leading systems. It may be well to remark at the outset that St. Thomas can be invoked, with some semblance of reason, in favour of them all.

Our purpose requires us to consider in any detail only the opinion according to which the formal object of hope consists in the relative goodness of God, or in God as good for us. That is to say, an act of hope, in this view, is simply an act of love of concupiscence of God. This is the opinion put forward by Scotus, and upheld by most of his followers. It was adopted by Suarez, and after him by a considerable number of Jesuit theologians down to the present day, one of its latest exponents being Fr. Lahousse, S.J.² The authority of St. Thomas is claimed by Suarez as being on his own side, "whatever

² *De Virt. Theol.*, Bruges, 1900.

others may say.”³ And indeed, if one were to read only the passages cited, one would be inclined to wonder why it could ever be maintained that the great Doctor taught otherwise.⁴ But a more thorough investigation reveals the unpleasant truth that St. Thomas, powerful ally that he is, cannot, however, be definitely attached to any one camp. In fact, it is probably safe to say that his teaching on divine hope, variously interpreted by theologians, as it has been, accounts largely for the divergence of opinion on the subject at the present day.

In proof of his position, Suarez explains that, distinct from love of charity, there is another form of love of God, by which we love God as our own supreme good, and for our own sake.⁵ He is at pains to prove that this love of God is good and supernatural, but he considers it altogether unnecessary to establish that it is distinct from love of charity. That is his starting point. A little further on, he puts forward, in the shape of an objection, the difficulty that

³ “Tertia sententia asserit obiectum spei esse Deum, ut summum bonum amabile amore concupiscentiae, quasi in commodum amantis : hanc divi Thomae, quicquid alii dicant, censeo esse, 22^{ae}, q. 17, a. 8, 9 ; q. disp. de Spe, a. 3.” Suarez, *De Spe*, Disp. i., Sect. iii., n. 4.

⁴ “Amor autem quidam est perfectus, quidam imperfectus : perfectus quidem amor est quo aliquis secundum se amatur, ut puta cum aliquis secundum se vult alicui bonum, sicut homo amat amicum. Imperfectus amor est quo quis amat aliquid, non secundum ipsum, sed ut illud bonum sibi ipsi proveniat, sicut homo amat rem quam concupiscit. Primus autem amor pertinet ad charitatem, quae inhaeret Deo secundum seipsum ; sed spes pertinet ad secundum amorem, quia ille qui sperat, aliquid sibi obtinere intendit,” 22^{ae}, q. 17, a. 8.

⁵ “Praeter amorem quo amatur Deus ex charitate, est alius distinctus, quo amatur Deus ut summum bonum amantis, in commodum ipsius amantis.” *De Spe*, Disp. i., Sect. iii., n. 4.

if hope is to be regarded as love of concupiscence of God, it is either identical with charity, or else is not a theological virtue at all. For if by love of concupiscence of God we mean that love by which we tend to him as our supreme and final good, we certainly equate it with charity, which, as St. Thomas so often says, is love of the supreme good, in so far as it is the object of beatitude.⁶ But if, on the other hand, love of concupiscence merely implies love of God in so far as it suits us to love him, and, therefore, is ultimately reducible to love of self, it can no longer claim to be an act of a theological virtue, whose object should be the infinite, uncreated good.⁷

In reply to the first portion of the objection, Suarez ventures an explanation which is so unconvincing that it is worth the trouble of quoting. The difficulty, we have seen, is that if love of divine concupiscence is supreme, reaching out to God as the infinitely lovable, and the final good of man, there is no love more perfect, and it is, therefore, an act of charity. Suarez responds: "Although we can love ourselves and our own beatitude supernaturally by charity, yet it is not by charity alone; for, even in love of oneself, charity is not proximately concerned with one's own natural advantage, but rather with the divine good or honour or excellence considered in itself; but the love of which we

⁶ 22^{ae}, q. 23, a. 4. Cf. Ch. vii.

⁷ Ibid., n. 6.

speak here refers proximately to one's own advantage, although this latter is supernatural and of a higher order." ⁸

It seems difficult to rest satisfied with an explanation that leaves us very much where we were at the outset. The learned theologian volunteered to explain wherein hope, understood as love of concupiscence, differs from charity, and he concludes with the bland assurance that these virtues do really differ—that whereas both may refer to the same object, our final happiness, yet the former does so in a less perfect manner than the latter. But at least he enables us to dispose of the other alternative proposed, that, namely, love of hope, if not equivalent to charity, is not a theological virtue at all. "Love of concupiscence" is an elastic expression, and may be taken to mean that mere selfishness by which one loves an object solely as a means to one's own pleasure or satisfaction; thus understood, love of God would not be an act of a theological virtue, for the ultimate object of love is not God, but self. St. Augustine has defined sin as "the use of things which should be enjoyed, and the enjoyment of things which should be used"—*uti fruendis, frui utendis*; that is to say, it is sinful to employ as means what should be regarded

⁸ "Licet ex charitate possimus amare nos ipsos amore supernaturali, et beatitudinem nobis, tamen non ex illa sola; nam charitas etiam in amore sui non respicit proxime proprium commodum naturae, sed vel divinum bonum, vel honorem, vel divinam excellentiam secundum se; at vero hic amor, de quo loquimur, proxime attendit rationem proprii commodi, quamvis supernaturalis et altioris ordinis." *De Spe*, Disp. i., Sect. iii., n. 9.

as ends of action, and conversely, to embrace as ends what ought to be used as means. And it is perfectly obvious that to love God as a means to our own well-being is an undue subordination of the infinite to the finite, an act which is not merely not a virtue, but altogether wrong and sinful.⁹ But there is a love of self which is a virtue, and even which is the highest form of virtue, when we so love ourselves that our acts are directed to our supreme and final happiness. In the sense, therefore, that the attainment of the final good, which is the possession of God, is bound up with, and inseparable from our own truest interest, we may say that our love of God is selfish; yet not selfish in the inordinate sense already explained. Suarez, therefore, very rightly contends that love of concupiscence is a theological virtue, because, as he says, the motive is the uncreated goodness of God, considered in its relation to us.¹⁰ But it still requires to be shown that a higher form of love is commanded, or even possible. A subsequent chapter will deal more fully with this matter.

A brief reference has already been made to a further anomaly which is a consequence of the

⁹ If what has been said above be true, St. Thomas cannot have held that hope consists formally in love of concupiscence of God; else he could not have written such words as these:—"Spes prae-supponit amorem eius quod quis adipisci se sperat, qui est amor concupiscentiae; quo quidem amore magis se amat qui concupiscit bonum, quam aliquid aliud." 12^{ae}, q. 66, a. 6, ad 2.

¹⁰ "Ratio amandi est ipsamet bonitas increata Dei, non ut est bonum Dei, sed ut est bonum increatum meum, et ita sufficienter attingit hic amor Deum, prout necessarium est ad Theologalem virtutem." Ibid., n. 9.

view we have been so far considering. It is to the effect that if hope is essentially a love of concupiscence of God, it is lost by every mortal sin, and not merely, as is generally stated, by sins of despair or presumption, and also by sins of infidelity. Now, it is the common, in fact, the universally received teaching, that when charity is lost by mortal sin, the infused virtue of hope still remains in the soul, unless the sin by which charity was forfeited is formally opposed to faith or hope. Suarez, always anxious to assign a precise qualification to every point of theological teaching, calls this the altogether certain doctrine, and the contrary he declares to be erroneous;¹¹ and later theologians show no disposition to question the assertion.¹² Now, the love of concupiscence, which, according to Suarez also, is the essential act of theological hope, must, if it be a theological act at all, regard God as the infinite good, preferable to any other actual or possible good; the act must be supreme. But this is equivalent to saying that any act by which the agent prefers a creature to God is formally opposed to the theological virtue of hope. We have already seen that every mortal sin is formally opposed to love of concupiscence of God, inasmuch as it must necessarily imply the choice of a finite good in preference to the infinite. The sinner is confronted with this

¹¹ *De Gratia*, l. 11, Cap. 5, n. 15; also *De Spe*, Disp. i., Sect. viii., n. 2.

¹² *Cf.* Mazzella, *De Virt. Inf.*, nn. 194, 216; Billot, *De Virt. Inf.*, p. 154 *sqq.*

finite pleasure and with the infinite good. To take the former he rejects the latter; he cannot have both. His act of rejection of God is formally opposed to love of concupiscence, and, therefore, on the view under consideration, to the theological virtue of hope. That is to say, when grace is lost, hope also perishes.¹³

Theologians fully recognise the force of this objection, and they are accustomed to reply by urging that even though by mortal sin the sinner separates himself from God, yet he still retains the hope of becoming reconciled subsequently. Suarez writes: "A person may commit sin and have at the same time an actual hope of pardon—nay even, he may be the more easily impelled to sin by the fact that he has such a hope. Thus, though in one way he separates himself from God, as his friend, last end, and master to whom obedience is due, in another way he adheres to God as omnipotent, merciful, and faithful to his promises."¹⁴ That is to say, the sinner separates from God, yet does not altogether separate from him; his aversion is not total, only partial. But

¹³ Whatever theory is adopted as to the nature of hope, it might be contended that the infused virtue is lost by any mortal sin whatsoever. For an infused virtue is but an accident, or mode of sanctifying grace. The infused virtue of hope, therefore, would be lost when its basis, sanctifying grace, ceases to exist in the soul. The hope that remains would not be the infused, but the acquired virtue. This, however, would not be admitted by any of the theologians alluded to, and the argument above can be used quite legitimately against them.

¹⁴ "Potest quis peccare actu cum actuali spe veniæ, imo inde sumere facilitatem peccandi. Et tunc licet una via recedat a Deo, ut ab amico, et ut ultime fine, et Domino cui obedire tenetur, alia adhaeret Deo ut omnipotenti, misericordî et fideli promissori." *De Gratia*, l. xi., C. 5, n. 17.

still he breaks the bond of friendship with God ; he turns away from his last end ; he refuses obedience to his supreme Lord and master.

If the reader will recall what has been said more than once already, regarding the essential malice of mortal sin, he will have little hesitation in denying the adequacy of this explanation. Remembering that mortal sin means that the sinner gives up God, choosing the finite instead of the infinite, and that for ever, he will arrive at the perfectly obvious conclusion that where there is no total separation from God there is no mortal sin. And it may be helpful to bear in mind, in this connexion, that the eternity of hell is justified on the ground that the sinner, by placing his last end in a created good, is determined to separate from God for ever, and therefore is deserving of being punished for ever.¹⁵ There is no room for a half-way position, holding on, as it were, with one hand to God, and with the other to the creature. It is true, to be sure, that while he lives, the sinner always retains the opportunity of being reconciled to God, and in so far he is not so totally cut off as if he had been already condemned to hell. But this is not to be attributed to the fact that sin does not effect such a complete separation ; it is altogether due to the infinite mercy of God, who wills not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted

¹⁵ Cf. St. Thomas, 12^{ae}, q. 87, a. 4 ; *Suppl.* q. 99, a. 1 ; Mazzella, *De Deo Creante*, n. 1269.

and live. Preachers never tire of reminding the faithful that it would be in perfect accord with the divine justice that the delinquent should be cut off in the midst of his sins, and they are ceaseless in extolling the boundless mercy which spares him.

Another attempt at solving the difficulty, differing little, if at all, from that which has been just discussed, is put forward somewhat in this manner. Although, it is said, the sinner rejects God by the commission of mortal sin, he does not thereby necessarily cease to regard him as infinitely good and lovable, and he may sin with the hope of subsequent forgiveness, without meaning to remain forever separated from God. While it is true, therefore, that in his present state the sinner has no claim to eternal happiness, he may still hope that at some time in the future he will become entitled to enjoy it. In the words of Cardinal Mazzella : " The desire of salvation by means of future merits, to be consummated by death, is compatible with actual present sin, though the efficacious desire of salvation by means of actually present merits is excluded by such sin."¹⁶

Now, there is no denying that the sinner may hope in this way that all will come right in the end ; that, although at present he is determined to have this particular created pleasure instead

¹⁶ " Desiderium aliquod obtinendi beatitudinem per merita postea futura et morte consummanda, componitur cum peccato actuali praesenti, quamvis non componitur cum illo desiderium efficacius obtinendi beatitudinem per merita actu praesentia." *De Virt. Inf.*, n. 217. Cf. St. Thomas, 12^{ae}, q. 65, a. 4 ; Billot, *De Virt. Inf.*, p. 159.

of the infinite good, a time will come when he will prefer the latter to the former in an efficacious manner. But surely this hope of his is not the theological virtue ; the virtue, on the hypothesis under consideration, which requires that God is to be loved with supreme love, more than any good whatsoever ? For does he not actually prefer something else to God ? It will avail him nothing to say that he means to prefer God in the future ; he is required to do so now. The hope that abides with the sinner, therefore, is not the theological virtue, so understood ; it is merely the hope that the theological virtue will be recovered—the hope to hope.

Finally, we may recall the teaching of the New Testament, and of all the theologians, that with the blessed in heaven hope no longer exists. It is a trite saying that in the next life hope gives place to fruition, as faith to vision. In the words of St. Paul : “ When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away.” ¹⁷ And again : “ Hope that is seen is not hope. For what a man seeth, why doth he hope for ? ” ¹⁸ But will it be maintained for a moment that love of concupiscence of God will cease in heaven ? Why should it cease ? Is not God as much *our* supreme good in heaven as while we are wayfarers here below, and shall we not love him as such ?

Let us hear Suarez again. Already we have

¹⁷ I Cor. xiii., 10.

¹⁸ Rom. viii., 24. Cf. St. Thomas, 12^{ae}, q. 67, a. 4 ; 22^{ae}, q. 18, a. 2.

found him championing the view that divine hope consists essentially in love of concupiscence. We shall now find him declaring that acts of love of concupiscence are elicited by the blessed in heaven, but not acts of hope. It would be difficult to find anywhere in theology a more extraordinary piece of reasoning than that by which this great theologian endeavours to support the thesis that "the habit of hope remains substantially with the blessed, although in their case it does not produce acts of hope of essential beatitude, and hence it may be said not to remain precisely as hope."¹⁹ He readily agrees that hope does not continue in the next life, in accordance with the teaching of St. Paul and the theologians generally. But he urges that it is the act of hope, not the habit, which ceases. The permanence of the habit he proves from the fact that the blessed in heaven continue to elicit acts of love of concupiscence of God. These acts, he says, being supernatural, and quite in conformity with the state of blessedness, require a supernatural habit as their principle; this supernatural principle is the habit of hope.²⁰

¹⁹ "Dico quarto in Beatis manere habitum spei quo ad substantiam eius, quamvis non eliciat in eis actus spei essentialis, et ideo dici posset non manere sub ratione spei." *De Spe*, Disp. i., Sect. viii., n. 5.

²⁰ "Amor propriae beatitudinis supernaturalis, qui est etiam amor concupiscentiae Dei, manet in beatis, et similiter fruitio de propria felicitate iam possessa. Hi enim actus per se sunt supernaturales, et . . . nullam imperfectionem includunt repugnantem statui beatorum. . . . Deinde illi actus sunt valde consentanei naturae, et in illo statu omnis perfectio naturae manet, quae non repugnat statui; ergo habet habitum supernaturalem, qui est proprium principium illorum actuum . . . hic habitus est ipsemet habitus spei." *Ibid.*

We are made aware of the existence of a habit by the production of acts proper to that habit. If we observe that a certain class of acts is produced, we conclude to the existence of a habit from which they proceed. The habit has no purpose to serve, except as principle of its own proper acts. These acts, and no others, proceed from it; it cannot produce two or more separate and distinct classes of acts. If, then, the habit of hope exists in the soul, the acts which it produces must be acts of hope; if they are not, they cannot have proceeded from the habit of hope; if they are acts of love, their principle must be a habit of love. The reasoning of Suarez, therefore, if it proves anything, proves to demonstration that hope and love of concupiscence are quite distinct.

As this does not profess to be a treatise on the virtue of hope, the task which we set ourselves at the beginning of this Chapter is now complete. For if we have succeeded in showing that hope is not love of concupiscence, and if this latter is, notwithstanding, a theological virtue, nothing remains except to admit either that love of concupiscence is an act of charity,²¹ or else that there are four theological virtues; and the second alternative may be dismissed at once. At the same time our position will be strengthened the more by an outline, even the briefest, of a theory of hope which will take account of the

²¹ As is maintained, among many others, by Schiffini, *De Virt. Inf.* nn. 285 *sqq.*

difficulties indicated, as well as of some others to which reference will be made presently.

There is a variety of views from which to select, or at least a considerable number of variants of a few leading systems. According to one large body of theologians, the motive or formal object of hope consists in the divine help, in regarding God, they say, as "helping power"—*virtus Dei auxiliatrix*. Among the supporters of this theory may be mentioned St. Bonaventure, the Salamanca theologians, Billuart, and in recent times Schiffini. It is needless to say that St. Thomas is claimed in its favour. But, as to the precise divine attribute which motives the divine help, no agreement can be secured. God's omnipotence, his mercy, goodness, kindness, liberality, fidelity—all these individually appeal to some theologian or other as the fundamental motive of hope, while many consider that the motive consists in the combination of some of them, or of all. It would be quite impossible here to discuss the merits of all these opinions, hence it may be said at once that the view which seems best able to interpret the act of hope, as practised in actual life, is that which considers its formal object to be the fidelity of God to his promises.²² Of course fidelity to a promise implies the power to fulfil it, if the act of trust in the promissor is to be supreme; and hence the popular "Act of

²² For a very complete treatment of the various views mentioned, the reader should consult *Dict. de Théol. Cath.*, Tom. v., Col. 60 *sqq.*, s. v. *Espérance*.

Hope " combines these two attributes, throwing in also God's infinite goodness and mercy, though it is hard to see how these latter are comprehended in the act of confidence. " Relying on thy infinite power, goodness, and mercy, and on thy sacred promises to which thou art always faithful " are the words taught to children ; but it is noteworthy that an abbreviated form of the " Act of Hope " refers only to the attribute of fidelity : " My God, I hope in thee because thou art faithful to thy word." It is important to consider the Scriptural basis of this conception of the virtue.

St. Paul enumerates three theological virtues.²³ Faith is an intellectual assent to revealed truth on the supreme authority of God. Charity may be described generally as love of God. What then is hope ? In what terms does Scripture allude to this trust in God of which we pray ?

Of course, we must not expect any scientific analysis of the acts of theological virtues in the inspired writings, and we may, in fact, be prepared to find them but imperfectly distinguished, for in their exercise in the Christian life they are so bound up with one another that the sacred writers were in no way called upon to separate them in clear-cut fashion. Hence we need not be surprised to learn that the words faith (*πίστις*, fides), trust or confidence (*παρρησία* and also *πίστις*, fiducia), and hope, (*ἐλπίς*, spes), are frequently

²³ I. Cor., xiii., 13.

used almost indiscriminately.²⁴ There is, however, no difficulty in recognising strict theological faith as a distinct virtue, and hence it remains to account for trust or *fiducia* and hope. The possibilities are (1) that *fiducia* is a species of faith, or (2) that it is equivalent to hope, or (3) that it is distinct from both faith and hope, and that, therefore, there are four theological virtues, faith, trust, hope, and love. The third supposition is so likely that it need not be further considered. The first represents the common opinion; yet theologians are alive to the difficulties which the acceptance of it involves. For the act of theological faith has for its formal object the divine knowledge and truth; whereas the act of trust, while still presupposing this, yet itself rests on the power and fidelity of God. Hence Ripalda does not hesitate to say that there may be assents of faith which are not motivated by God's wisdom and veracity, but by his fidelity, constancy, and omnipotence.²⁵

²⁴ Cf. Pesch, *Praelect. Dogm.*, Tom. viii., nn. 120-123, where we read the following: Ex firma fide eorum, quae Deus revelavit de se suisque perfectionibus et promissis, homo concipit fiduciam seu firmam spem auxilii divini sive in genere sive in particulari casu. Nam 'nomen fiducia hoc principaliter significare videtur, quod aliquis spem concipiat ex hoc, quod credit verbis alicuius auxilium promittentis.' (St. Thomas, 22^{ae}, q. 129, a. 6.) Itaque quatenus fides est causa et radix huius fiducia, potest fides accipi pro fiducia causaliter, ut quando S. Jacobus ait: 'Postulet in fide nihil haesitans' (Jac. i., 6). Ibi enim et aliis similibus locis fides aut simpliciter ponitur pro fiducia, aut intelligitur quidem fides dogmatica, sed in quantum roborat spem.'

²⁵ "Plures sunt assensus fidei, qui non moventur ex sapientia Dei, nec etiam ex veracitate, si haec a fidelitate distinguatur: scilicet assensus quibus credimus fore infallibiliter, quae divinis promissionibus continentur . . . sed ex aliis attributis, ut fidelitate, constantia voluntatis, et efficacia omnipotentiae." *Apud Mazzella, De Vit. Inf.*, n. 311.

And Schiffini also evidently distinguishes different kinds of faith by recognising a difference in their formal objects.²⁶

If we call to mind the scholastic axiom that acts are specified by their formal objects, we shall see how hard it is to maintain such a position as this. The formal objects of the acts of faith and trust are said to be distinct, and yet the acts are themselves fundamentally the same! We may accordingly consider the second of the hypotheses suggested, which would equate trust or *fiducia* with hope. According to St. Thomas, *fiducia* is but a strengthened form of hope,²⁷ and although, he says, the name *fiducia* is derived from *fides*, the act which it designates refers to hope. "The word *fiducia*," he writes, "seems to be derived from *fides*. Now it pertains to faith to believe something and somebody. But *fiducia* pertains to hope, according to Job xi., 18 : *Habebis fiduciam, proposita tibi spe*. Hence, the word *fiducia* seems chiefly to signify that one conceives hope from belief in the words of someone who promises help."²⁸ For this view there is an abundance of Scriptural support which it is needless to adduce; suffice it to cite a single

²⁶ *De Virt. Inf.*, n. 117, ii.

²⁷ "Fiducia importat quemdam modum spei : est enim fiducia spes roborata ex aliqua firma opinione." 22^{ae}, q. 129, a. 6, ad 3^m.

²⁸ "Nomen fiduciae ex fide assumptum esse videtur. Ad fidem autem pertinet aliquid et alicui credere. Pertinet autem fiducia ad spem, secundum illud Job xi., 18 : *Habebis fiduciam proposita tibi spe*. Et ideo nomen fiduciae hoc principaliter significare videtur quod aliquis spem concipiat ex hoc quod credit verbis alicuius auxilium promittentis." Ibid. c.

text from the Epistle to the Hebrews which seems clear beyond possibility of misunderstanding: "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering (for he is faithful that hath promised)"—on which St. Thomas comments that the parenthesis contains the reason for hope, namely, the fidelity of God to his promises.²⁹ And although the Council of Trent did not intend to define the nature of the virtue in its decrees on justification, it is not easy to interpret them unless we understand divine hope somewhat after the manner here suggested.³⁰

The adoption of this view will enable us to explain in a simple manner what, if regarded in any other light, appear to be anomalies—namely, the nature of despair, and the certainty of hope. Despair is the judgment that salvation is impossible. The doomed convict in his cell despairs of reprieve, he regards it as impossible. Not that he ceases to desire it, to love it; and if hope consisted in love, it would not cease by despair.

Secondly, hope is said to be certain. All theologians accept the definition of the Master of the Sentences—" *spes est certa expectatio futurae*

²⁹ "Ratio huius (sc. spei) est, quia ille qui repromisit est fidelis: et ideo mentiri non potest." In loc.; cf. also Estius, in loc.

³⁰ By comparing Sess. vi., Cap. vi.: "ad considerandam Dei misericordiam se convertendo *in spem eriguntur, fidentes* Deum sibi propter Christum propitium fore" (Denz., n. 798), with Sess. xiv., Cap. iv.: "Hic contritionis motus . . . praeparat ad remissionem peccatorum, *si cum fiducia divinae misericordiae* et voto praestandi reliqua coniunctus sit etc." (Denz., n. 897), and also with ibid. "attritio . . . si voluntatem peccati excludat *cum spe veniae*" (Denz., n. 898), we find that the Council used the words *spes* and *fiducia* to represent the same idea.

beatitudinis. And the Epistle to the Hebrews compares the virtue to an anchor, firm and safe.³¹ But certainty is a property of acts of intellect, not of acts of will. How then can hope be certain? St. Thomas replies: "Certitude is found in a thing in two ways, essentially and by participation. It resides essentially in the cognoscitive faculty, but by participation in whatever is infallibly moved to its end by the cognoscitive faculty . . . and in this way hope tends with certainty to its end, partaking of the certainty of faith."³² This is the explanation adopted by all the theologians, and yet they contend that this participated certainty which they attribute to hope is not extrinsic to it, but is a real intrinsic property inhering in the habit and in the act.³³ One cannot well maintain at the same time that hope has a certainty which is all its own, and that this certainty is borrowed from faith.

³¹ Hebr. vi., 16 *sqq.*

³² "Certitudo invenitur in aliquo dupliciter, scilicet essentialiter et participative. Essentialiter quidem invenitur in vi cognoscitiva; participative autem in omni eo quod a vi cognoscitiva movetur infallibiliter ad finem suum . . . et sic etiam spes certitudinaliter tendit in suum finem, quasi participans certitudinem a fide." 22^{ae}, q. 18, a. 4.

³³ "Certitudo autem spei theologicae stat in peculiari quadam connexione cum bono futuro, quae, ob certissimam iudicium fidei cui innititur, singularem quamdam firmitatem eiusdem spei constituit. Quae quidem firmitas non est mera quaedam denominatio extrinseca, sed vera proprietas intrinsecus inhaerens in habitu et actu spei theologicae, tametsi a firmitate fidei derivata." Schiffini, *De Vir. Inf.*, n. 231, I.

CHAPTER IV.

MERIT.

IF a wanderer, passing by your garden, comes in and joins your workmen, doing just as much as any other whom you have engaged to cultivate it, and if in the evening he comes to you demanding the wages for his labour, you will promptly tell him that he has no claim to wages. That is, as far as strict justice is concerned. In the same way, if you proclaim in the morning that every man who works in your garden for the day will receive a certain wage ; and if some individual comes to work, not with a view to remuneration, but merely, let us say, for healthy exercise, or to acquire experience in horticulture, not intending his labour for your benefit, and therefore not regarding it as an equivalent to so much of your money, he will have no strict claim in justice to the day's hire.

So it is with supernatural merit. Those who serve God will be rewarded by the possession of the beatific Vision for ever, and every act of theirs done for that end will merit an increase of that reward, a fuller or more intense enjoyment of the Infinite Good. *But they must work for that end.* It is not sufficient that they objectively perform those actions to the performance of which a reward is attached. Not alone must

they labour in the Master's field, but they must labour for him, in his service.

This much is clear and undisputed in our theology. But many questions have yet to be answered. In order to merit the reward, we say, you must work for God, you must act with reference to him. How is this done? Nobody will say it suffices that, inasmuch as we form part of God's creation, all our actions thereby must be necessarily directed to the ultimate end of creation, if they are good at all, although this should certainly be the case on the view of those moralists who regard reference to the last end as of the essence of morality.

Whatever may be held about the essence of morality, it is certain, at all events, that for merit our acts must be referred to God, and here our theologians are at variance as to the manner of the reference which is required. And the fact that St. Thomas is quoted by the supporters of every view should be sufficient indication that it is very difficult to determine what is the precise position taken up by the Angelic Doctor himself.

The following passage from his writings will suffice for our purpose :—

“ The motion of the human mind towards the enjoyment of the divine good is properly an act of charity, by which all the acts of other virtues are directed to this end, inasmuch as the other virtues are commanded by charity. And therefore merit of eternal life primarily pertains to charity,

but to the other virtues in a secondary way, as their acts are commanded by charity.”¹

The reader will notice more than one important point in this short passage. In the first place, it is to be remarked that “the motion of the human mind towards the enjoyment of the divine good is properly an act of charity.” That is to say, we have here no distinction between love of concupiscence and absolute love, but every form of love which embraces the divine good is said to be “properly an act of charity.” This is a matter which will be enlarged upon in a subsequent chapter. Secondly, it is important to observe that it is by an *act* of charity that the acts of all the other virtues are directed to the last end, and not, as some would contend, by the mere habit. There should be no difficulty at all if we merely recognised that meritorious acts must proceed from a person who has the habit of charity, or is in the state of sanctifying grace, for God rewards only his friends. This much is admitted by all. But by some it is held to be enough. The habit of charity is merely the capacity for eliciting acts of charity. It matters not in this connexion whether one regards the habit of charity as identical with sanctifying grace, as do the Scotists, or as distinguished from it, as do the Thomists. The latter are

¹ “Motus autem humanæ mentis ad fruitionem divini boni est proprius actus caritatis, per quem omnes actus aliarum virtutum ordinantur in hunc finem, secundum quod aliae virtutes imperantur a caritate.” *Summ. Theol.*, 12^æ, q. 114, a. 4.

accustomed to designate sanctifying grace as an entitative habit, giving the soul a supernatural being, while they call charity an operative habit, giving supernatural power to act. The reader can judge for himself whether there is any basis for the distinction.² If it be really true, it means that the state of charity is something added to the state of grace, being at least a more proximate capacity for supernatural action. But it is not easy to conceive how the acts of such a soul are to be qualified.³ If all the acts of one in the state of charity are motivated by that virtue, there is no other virtue in any true sense, and justice, temperance, patience, and the rest, will all be acts of charity. How, if so, we are to avoid the inevitable consequences of this teaching is not plain. For among the propositions of Quesnel were condemned the following :—

“ To Charity alone God gives the prize ; he who runs from any other impulse or motive runs in vain.”

“ God rewards only Charity, for Charity alone honours God.”⁴

We must simply conclude that whatever be the manner in which we conceive the state of charity to influence our meritorious actions, the act of every individual virtue still remains

² Cf. St. Thomas, 12^{ae}, q. 110, a. 3 ; *De Verit.*, q. 27, a. 2.

³ Cf. Pohle-Preuss, *Grace*, p. 413.

¹ “ Deus non coronat nisi caritatem : qui currit ex alio impulsu et ex alio motivo, in vanum currit.”

“ Deus non remunerat nisi caritatem : quoniam caritas sola Deum honorat.” Denz. *Enchir.*, nn. 1,405, 1,406.

an act of that virtue, and does not become properly an act of charity. The words of Billuart may be quoted with effect here: "In merit charity is related to the other virtues as a universal cause to particular causes: and as the universal cause does not interfere with, but rather completes the causality of the particular causes; so, although all the virtues derive their meritorious efficacy from charity, they all merit individually under its influence."⁵

The main fact emerges, at all events, from several passages in St. Thomas, that in order to be meritorious, acts must be commanded, as he says, by charity. One such passage I have already quoted. Here is another: "The act of faith is not meritorious, unless faith operates through charity Similarly, the act of patience and fortitude is not meritorious, unless it be done from charity, according to I. Cor. xiii.: 'If I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.'"⁶ The mention of this text of Corinthians reminds one of St. Thomas' commentary on it: "Rightly therefore St. Paul compares the speech that lacks charity to the sound of a dead thing such as brass or a cymbal, which, though it gives forth a clear sound, is nevertheless not living but

⁵ *De Gratia*, Diss. viii., a. iv., Obj. 4. Cf. St. Thomas, *De Potentia*, q. 6, a. 9.

⁶ "Fidei actus non est meritorius, nisi fides per dilectionem operetur . . . Similiter etiam actus patientiae et fortitudinis non est meritorius, nisi aliquis ex caritate haec operetur, secundum illud I. Cor. xiii., 3: *Si tradidero corpus meum, ita ut ardeam, caritatem autem non habuero, nihil mihi prodest.*" *Summ. Theol.* 12^{ae}, q. 114, a. 4, ad. 3.

dead : so too, the speech of a man who has not charity, however well it be expressed, is yet but a dead thing, because it avails nothing towards the meriting of eternal life, etc.”⁷

It is matter for little surprise that some should ask, in view of these statements, whether St. Thomas denies all merit to the acts of other virtues considered precisely as such. It will be observed that the merit he ascribes to acts commanded by charity is “merit of eternal life,” that is to say, the right to the essential reward which consists in the possession of the infinite good for ever. Besides this, it is possible to merit accidental rewards, an increase of glory, etc., and these may be obtained by the acts of the several virtues considered in themselves. Here are the words of St. Thomas :—“The quantity of merit may be estimated from two sources : in one way, from the root of charity and grace, and this corresponds to the essential reward, which consists in the fruition of God ; for he who does anything through greater love, will more perfectly enjoy God. In another way the quantity of merit may be judged from the quantity of the work performed, and this may be absolute or proportionate. The widow who put her two coins into the treasury did a lesser work, absolutely speaking, than those who gave great gifts ; but proportionately she did more, in the mind of the Lord, for she exceeded her means

⁷ *Comm. in I. Cor.*, Cap. xiii., Lect. i.

more. Each of these corresponds to the accidental reward, which is pleasure in some created good.”⁸ Even more clearly than this the same teaching is found in another place: “A meritorious work derives its character of merit from two sources, from which it also derives its character of goodness; namely, from the root of charity, which refers the act to the last end; and thus it merits the essential reward, namely, the attainment of the end, which is the crown. And from its own nature the act is in a manner praiseworthy, as from the due circumstances, from the habit which elicits it, and from its proximate end; and thus it merits some accidental reward, which is called an aureole.”⁹ And also: “External labour increases the accidental reward; but the increase of merit in respect of the essential reward consists principally in charity, the sign of which is external labour endured for Christ.”¹⁰

As we have already seen in a previous chapter, the essential malice of mortal sin consists in the aversion of the sinner from his last end for ever. If this be so, it will not be unreasonable to suppose,

⁸ “Quantitas meriti ex duobus potest pensari. Uno modo ex radice caritatis et gratiae; et talis quantitas meriti respondet praemio essentiali, quod consistit in Dei fruitione; qui enim ex maiori caritate aliquid facit, perfectius Deo fruitur. Alio modo pensari potest quantitas meriti ex quantitate operis; quae quidem est duplex, sc. absoluta et proportionalis. Vidua enim quae misit duo aera minuta in gazophylacium, minus opus fecit quantitate absoluta quam illi qui magna munera posuerunt; sed quantitate proportionali vidua plus fecit secundum sententiam Domini quia magis eius facultatem superabat. Utraque tamen quantitas meriti respondet praemio accidentali, quod est gaudium de bono creato.” *Summ. Theol.*, 1^a, q. 95, a. 4.

⁹ In IV. *Dist.* 49, q. 5, a. 1, c.

¹⁰ *Summ. Theol.* 22^{ae}, q. 182, a. 2, ad 1^m.

in the case of merit, that the essential reward will be obtainable only by an act by which the agent attaches himself to the good which he proposes to gain. Thus, for merit some sort of reference of act to end would be required, and, as we have just seen, this is demanded by St. Thomas. It may be considered a severe doctrine which denies the essential reward to less perfect acts, of religion, justice, etc. But it is not more severe than the corresponding doctrine in regard to the punishment of venial sin, according to which venial sin, though not fully deliberate, may, in the view of some of the foremost theologians, be punished by a temporary privation of the infinite good.¹¹ In the same way, imperfectly good acts may be rewarded by some good short of the eternal possession of the infinite good.¹² Such is the teaching of St. Thomas and his school. Billuart, for example, in discussing this question, declares that no one denies that to those acts of virtue in a just man, which are not influenced by charity, some accidental reward corresponds. And he lays down the thesis that "No act of a virtue, acquired or infused, in a just man, can merit *de condigno* eternal life, unless it be performed under the influence, virtual at least, of charity."¹³ The doctrine of St. Thomas and his followers is claimed to be supported by all those

¹¹ Cf. MacDonald, *Principles of Moral Science*, p. 141; Lacroix, *Théol. Mor.*, De Peccatis, n. 57.

¹² St. Thomas, *De Potentia*, q. 6, a. 9., c.

¹³ *De Gratia*, Diss. viii., a. iv.

texts of Scripture which attribute everything to charity. "If I have not charity," says St. Paul, "I am nothing." A whole chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians is taken up with the theme that the virtues are of no avail to merit eternal life unless they be inspired by charity. The text of I. Cor. x. is well known, and in every mouth: "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever else you do, do all to the glory of God." And throughout the Gospels, our Lord always promises the eternal reward to those who perform acts of virtue "in his name," "propter Christum," "in gloriam Dei," "propter nomen meum," etc., thus implying that all these actions should be done strictly for God, that is to say, from the motive of divine love.

At present, however, the trend of theological opinion appears to have taken a different direction, owing, it would seem, to the influence of Suarez. The great Jesuit theologian lays down as his principle that "acts of infused virtues are meritorious by reason of their own goodness and connatural tendency to the end, without any other extrinsic reference derived from a past or present act of charity";¹⁴ a principle which he extends to the acquired virtues.¹⁵ In this he is

¹⁴ "Dico ergo actus virtutum infusarum factos ab homine grato, esse meritorios de condigno supernaturalis beatitudinis, ex vi suae bonitatis et connaturalis ponderis seu relationem in illum finem, absque alia relatione, quasi extrinseca, quae per actum caritatis praeteritum vel praesentem illis adveniat." Lib. xii., *De Merito*, Cap. ix., n. 4.

¹⁵ "Dico ergo primo; actus moralium virtutum acquisitarum, exerciti aliquo modo supernaturali a iustis, sunt meritorii de condigno vitae aeternae." Ibid. Cap. x., n. 14.

followed by most modern Jesuit writers, Mazzella, Schiffini, Hurter, and by others such as Pohle.

In order to understand the position taken up by Suarez, we must consider for a moment the different ways in which an act may be referred to the last end by charity, as we may find explained by Suarez himself.¹⁶ The reference of an act to the last end by charity may be, as everybody knows, habitual, actual, or virtual. The habitual reference consists merely in the existence in the agent of the habit of charity, which thus would characterise, so to speak, all his acts as directed thereby to the end of his whole being. This would seem to be the only kind of reference required by the Salamanca theologians, who say that "every morally good act of one who is in the state of grace merits eternal life,"¹⁷ and who, of course, claim St. Thomas as their guide. The actual reference, as the name itself explains, demands an actual motion, caused by a really existing act of charity—which act commands the act of another virtue and directs it to its own end. There are several explanations of what is meant by a virtual reference. According to some, it is quite sufficient for the agent to make an act of charity by which he refers himself and all his subsequent actions to the end of charity; it matters not how long it may have been since this act

¹⁶ Suarez, *De Merito*, Cap. ix.

¹⁷ *De Merito*, d. 4, n. 66.

was elicited, or whether even the memory of it should have been lost ; all that is needed is that it should never have been retracted. It will be easily seen that this is not really a virtual reference at all ; hence most theologians require some connexion by which the preceding act should influence the present act in a real manner. Suarez, however, regards this reference by the act which is entirely past as something more than a habitual reference, though less than actual, and he calls it by the name of objective reference. Not believing that he has yet exhausted all the possible modes of reference, Suarez adds still another, which he calls innate or quasi-connatural—a reference, he explains, which does not spring from the preceding act, but from the necessary connexion of the virtue exercised with the virtue of charity, so that acts of this other virtue tend of their own accord (*pondere suo*) to the end of charity.

This last manner of reference it is which commends itself to Suarez, who, therefore, “asserts” that acts of infused virtues are meritorious “by reason of their own goodness and connatural tendency or reference to the last end, without any other extrinsic reference derived from a past or present act of charity.”¹⁸ And he is led to this conclusion by the consideration that these acts are supernatural in substance, intrinsically proceeding from God, who gives actual grace to perform them. It would be, therefore, altogether

¹⁸ Ibid., n. 4.

superfluous to require a special act of reference to the last end.¹⁹

Can it be true that every supernatural act tends of itself to God? What of a materially sinful act, even of a just man, and even though supernatural? Suppose a priest gives absolution to a penitent who is not properly disposed, believing him to be a fit subject, is his act not materially wrong? And is it not a supernatural act, performed by a supernatural faculty, with the aid of actual grace? How could any possible reference of such an act to the last end make it meritorious? The very first condition required for a meritorious act is that the act be morally good. No matter how explicit and how immediate may be the reference of a sinful act to God, it will avail the agent nothing. There is no reward for wrong-doing, but in such a case the wrong is not imputed because it is not willed.

The theory is evidently an analogy, applied to the supernatural order, derived from the view of so many writers on Ethics and Moral Theology that reference to the last end is of the essence of morality, that "good" and "referred

¹⁹ Suarez argues as above from the principle: "Quae a Deo ut efficiente procedunt, ad ipsum ut finem redeunt." Would not this prove altogether too much? Is not God the immediate, effective principle of every possible action of a creature? Cf. "Ad omnes causarum creaturarum operationes requiritur, ut creatura ad actionem moveatur per concursum simultaneum Dei physicum, ita ut, quidquid actualitatis est in cuiusque creaturae actione et effectu, a Deo procedat tamquam ab immediato, licet non unico, principio suo effectivo." Hontheim, *Institutiones Theodicaeae*, n. 966.

to the last end " are interchangeable. St. Thomas is quoted as the protagonist of this system by all its supporters, yet there is nothing easier than to find innumerable passages in his works where he clearly distinguishes the fundamental goodness of an act from the added goodness it derives from being referred to the last end.²⁰

Now, if it be agreed that there is a goodness in acts prior to any relation to an end, it is obvious that it is not reference to the end that makes them good. And the fact that acts can be good without such reference shows that such good acts do not tend of themselves, *pondere suo*, to the last end. Why should meritorious actions have this property of tending *pondere suo* to the supernatural last end? Morally good acts are pleasing to God, but they are not necessarily meritorious, for even a sinner can perform morally good acts. In the same way, the acts of a person in the state of grace, in the supernaturalised state, are not only morally good, but supernatural, seeing that they are the product of actual grace operating in a supernatural soul. But why should they on that account have an intrinsic and necessary reference to the supernatural last end? How did they get it? Not from the nature of the act, as we have seen, for the natural act has no such reference. And not from its supernaturalisation, for this will not suffice of itself. Hence obviously some manner of reference is necessary—that

²⁰ See Chapter I.

is, some extrinsic reference, contrary to the view of Suarez.

It is important to observe that even in Suarez' view of innate reference, the meritorious character of the act is derived from its relation to charity. Hence it is true, according to all, that, without charity, there is no true virtue. As St. Thomas says: "As the end is twofold, one ultimate and one proximate end, so there is also a twofold good, one ultimate and general good, and another good, proximate and particular. The ultimate and principal good is the enjoyment of God and to this end man is directed by charity It is clear, then, that true virtue absolutely so called, is that which aims at the principal good of man and in that way there can be no true virtue without charity." ²¹

All our theologians are wont to describe charity as "the form of the virtues." In this they are but following the teaching of St. Paul. In the Epistle to the Galatians, faith is said to be of no avail unless it operates through charity; ²² from charity it derives its energy and efficacy. Without charity the most wonderful charisms are profitless; ²³ faith and hope are secondary to it; ²⁴

²¹ Sicut ergo duplex est finis, unus ultimus, et alius proximus, ita etiam est duplex bonum, unum quidem ultimum et universale, et aliud proximum et particulare. Ultimum quidem et principale bonum hominis est Dei fruitio . . . et ad hoc ordinatur homo per caritatem . . . Sic ergo patet quod virtus vera simpliciter est illa quae ordinatur ad principale bonum hominis . . . et sic nulla vera virtus potest esse sine caritate." *Summ. Theol.* 22^{ae}, q. 23, a. 7.

²² Gal. v., 6.

²³ I. Cor. xiii., 1-3.

²⁴ Ibid., 8-13.

the special virtues are not really virtuous at all in its absence.²⁵ Hence, St. Thomas declares that "the acts of all the other virtues are directed to the last end by charity . . . and in so far it is said to be the form of the virtues."²⁶ The sense is well expressed in the commentary of Cajetan: "The other virtues may be understood in two senses. First, as virtues each in its own class; and, in this sense, charity is not their form. . . . Secondly, they may be understood as virtues absolutely in the theological sense, being so with reference to 'formed acts,' And their form is derived from charity, which directs the acts of all the virtues to the last end, absolutely speaking. Hence, charity is the form of the virtues in that it constitutes them as virtues in an unqualified sense."²⁷

The other virtues, to be meritorious of eternal life, must, according to the terminology of St. Thomas and his school, be "commanded by charity." Philosophers speak of acts elicited and of acts commanded by a faculty. The former are those which proceed directly from the faculty itself, as reasoning from the intellect; the latter proceed from some other faculty under the

²⁵ Ibid., 4-7.

²⁶ 22^{ae}, q. 23, a. 8; Cf. *Quaest. Disput. De Caritate*, a. 3.

²⁷ "Virtutes aliae . . . dupliciter sumi possunt. Primo, ut sunt virtutes in proprio genere. Et sic caritas non est earum forma: . . . Alio ergo modo sumuntur ut sunt virtutes simpliciter apud theologum. Et sic, quia habent quod sint virtutes in ordine ad actus formatos . . . ; et formatio est ex caritate ordinante omnium virtutum actus in finem ultimum simpliciter: ideo caritas est forma virtutum tamquam constituens eas in esse virtutis simpliciter." Comm. on 22^{ae}, q. 24, a. 8.

direction of the first, as when a man walks, the act of walking is said to be commanded by the will.²⁸ "Now, from the fact that charity regards God under the aspect of the last end without qualification, it follows that to it pertains the command of all the other virtues. For a higher virtue or power is said to command a lower, in so far as the act of the lower is directed to the end of the higher. And since all the other virtues are directed to the end of charity, it commands the acts of all, and is therefore called their 'motor.' But further, that which in morals refers an act to an end is said to be its form, and hence the passive participation of the command and direction of charity is, so to say, the form which constitutes other acts in the domain of virtue, properly so called. And as virtues are denominated from 'formed acts,' charity is called their form, not as exemplar or essentially, but rather effectively,"²⁹ A poor person meets you on the road, and asks you for an alms "for the love of God." Your act, if you comply, is an act of almsgiving, commonly called an act of charity; its proper object is the precise aspect of goodness in helping a brother in distress, but when done "for the love of God" it assumes a new aspect of virtue; is clothed with a higher form, reaching out, not to the immediate

²⁸ "Elicit enim virtus illos actus tantum qui sunt secundum rationem propriæ formæ, sicut instituta recte facere, et temperantia temperanter; sed imperare dicitur omnes actus quos ad finem suum advocat." St. Th. *Q. Disp. de Carit.* a. 5, ad. 3^m.

²⁹ Billot, *De Virt. Inf.*, p. 399.

end of relief of distress, but to the ultimate end and final good, God.

Will anybody venture to say that such an act of almsgiving will merit for the giver the eternal reward, if he gives for the sake of mere display, or even out of pity for the needy? It is, of course, assumed that he is in the state of grace. But is this enough? Is the almsgiving out of pity clothed with the higher form which directs the act to the final end? Unless we are prepared to abandon the principle that a reward is not given for acts done with no view to the end, we must admit that it is not.

Of course, I am aware that St. Thomas will be quoted against the position I have been trying to maintain. The following is a favourite passage for the purpose: "It is not necessary that to every act which is referred to some proximate end there should be conjoined an actual intention directing it to the last end; but it suffices if at some time all those ends be actually referred to the last end; as takes place when a person thinks of directing his whole self to the love of God, for then whatever he refers to himself will be referred to God. And if it be asked when must an act be referred to the last end, this is the same as asking when must the habit of charity emerge into act."³⁰

Now, it cannot be said that in this and similar passages St. Thomas wishes to exclude all influence

³⁰ *In II. Dist. 40, q. 1, a. 5, ad 6^m.*

of charity. He simply means to deny the necessity of an actual reference of every individual act to the last end. This should be obvious from the fact that he requires a reference to the last end somewhat frequently, as often as one is bound to make an act of charity. As Billuart says,³¹ every man in the state of grace makes frequent acts of charity, else he would not remain in the state of grace. Hence, every just man easily fulfils the command of referring acts to God.

It might appear, too, that, according to St. Thomas, every act is either meritorious or demeritorious, thus excluding the possibility of a morally good act, not meritorious because not referred by charity to the last end. Thus he says: "In those who have charity every act is either meritorious or demeritorious."³² And again: "In the case of a man in the state of grace, his act must be meritorious or demeritorious; for, as a bad act will be demeritorious, so a good one will be meritorious; because, since charity commands all the virtues, as the will commands all the faculties, whatever is directed to the end of some virtue will be directed to the end of charity . . . and will thus be meritorious, etc."³³

However, we must remember that, on his teaching already examined, he holds that such good acts, not referred to the last end, merit an

³¹ *De Gratia*, Dissert. viii., a. iv.

³² Q. 2, *De Malo*, a. 5, ad 7.

³³ *II. Dist.* 40, q. 1, a. 5.

accidental reward. But, furthermore, the Angelic Doctor would seem to believe that, for another reason, all acts of the justified are meritorious. For example, he says: "When a person refers himself to God in everything done for himself, there virtually resides the intention of the ultimate end, which is God; hence, if he have charity, he can merit by every act."³⁴ Therefore, according to St. Thomas, the precept of eliciting frequent acts of charity secures the required reference to the last end, so that all acts of the just man may be meritorious.

Although it might appear from the foregoing that the disagreement among the theologians on this matter is very considerable, it will be found on examination to be of little importance. If we except such extremists as Bañez, who required that all meritorious acts should be elicited by charity;³⁵ and Bellarmine, who required an actual reference of every individual act to the last end;³⁶ we find that there is a general agreement, first, on the necessity for merit of some reference of acts to end, and, secondly, on the necessity, however it be understood, of charity for this reference. St. Thomas and his followers require a virtual reference, the acts being commanded by charity; while Suarez and his school are content with the innate or quasi-connatural

³⁴ Q. 2, *De Virtutibus*, a. 11, ad. 2.

³⁵ 22^{ae}, q. 24, a. 6, dub. 5.

³⁶ *De Iustificacione*, l. 5, C. 15.

reference, as already explained, and, it is contended, as approved by the Council of Trent.³⁷ Wherefore, say some, the teaching of the Angelic Doctor must yield to that of the Council.³⁸ Suarez, however, unwilling to abandon the greatest of the schoolmen to such an ignoble fate, ventures to suggest that all that was meant by St. Thomas was that all meritorious works "should have some relation to supernatural charity, and be founded upon and have their roots in charity; for this it would be sufficient that they be performed from any supernatural motive, provided they are performed by a friend of God."³⁹ Much more ingenious is the explanation offered by the Würzburg theologians. When St. Thomas, they say, ascribes merit of eternal life only to acts commanded by charity, he is not to be understood as excluding the meritorious efficacy of these acts themselves. He merely means that when such acts *are* commanded by charity, their meritorious character is derived primarily from that source, and not from themselves. Further, when he writes that the *essential reward* is due to acts performed under the command of charity, the sense is not that acts of other virtues of themselves may not also merit it, but that the quantity of the essential reward is commensurate with the quantity of habitual charity.⁴⁰ The reader

³⁷ Sess. vi., Cap. xvi., Denz., n. 809.

³⁸ Cf. Mazzella, *De Virt. Inf.*, n. 1350.

³⁹ *De Gratia*, l. xii., Cap. x., n. 34.

⁴⁰ *De Caritate*, c. 2, a. 3, n. 307.

who consults the pages of St. Thomas will have little trouble in concluding that this explanation is altogether too far-fetched ; it strains the sense of passages in themselves admitting of a clear meaning.

Whatever be the theory adopted of the necessity of directing one's actions to God, the faithful have always been encouraged to renew this act of reference very frequently. The " morning offering," taught to all Catholic children, and recited every day, is a daily act of charity, as St. Thomas so clearly teaches.⁴¹ Is this act to be understood as an act of love which prescind from the desirability of eternal happiness for the agent ? Or is it rather to be understood in the light of the well-known words in the Epistle to the Hebrews : " He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and is a rewarder to them that seek him ? "⁴² Seeking God, the Commentators tell us, means working for him—that is, for love of him. The seeker works for a reward, indeed, but the reward is God himself.⁴³ Is anything more required of man than that he should seek his last end ? Does he not seek it by love of divine concupiscence ?

⁴¹ Cf. *supra*, p. 12.

⁴² Hebr. xi., 6.

⁴³ " Secundo, quod sciat quod Deus habeat providentiam de rebus. *Aliter enim nullus iret ad ipsum, si non speraret aliquam remunerationem ab ipso* : . . . Merces autem est illud quod homo quaerit ex labore (Mt. xx., 8). Quae merces nihil est aliud quam Deus, quia nihil extra ipsum debet homo quaerere." St. Thomas, *In. Ep. ad Hebr.*, Lectio ii.

CHAPTER V.

CONTRITION AND ATTRITION.

(a)—The Scholastic Teaching.

THE Old Dispensation has been called the Law of Fear; the New, the Law of Love. The Old Law was but the prelude to the New, a state of preparation; and the fear of God, which is spoken of as the predominant motive which impelled men to observe the divine commands, yielded place to the gentle sway of Christian love.

Still, in the Old Law, imperfect and merely preparatory though it was, no precept was inculcated with more insistency by God than the commandment of Love. "This commandment, that I command thee this day, is not above thee, nor far off from thee; nor is it in heaven, that thou shouldst say: Which of us can go up to heaven to bring it unto us, and we may hear and fulfil it in work? Nor is it beyond the sea, that thou mayst excuse thyself and say: Which of us can cross the sea, and bring it unto us, that we may hear and do that which is commanded? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayst do it. Consider that I have set before thee this day life and good, and on the other hand death and evil: *That thou mayst love the Lord thy God, and walk in his ways, and keep his commandments*

and ceremonies and judgments, and thou mayst live.”¹ And the commandment had been previously enunciated with all particulars : “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength,”² the very same commandment which Jesus Christ declared was the greatest and the first of all.³

In this respect, therefore, the New Dispensation differs in no wise from the Old. At all times love of God of the most perfect kind was necessary and of precept—for the just, that they might remain in justice, and for sinners, that they might recover the justice which they had lost. Those who had offended God grievously were obliged to retract their sins by a contrary act of the love of God ; or, which is the same thing, they were to have perfect contrition. Sin is not remitted unless retracted.

Now, it is a commonplace with our theologians that justification is easier in the New Dispensation than it was in the Old. And it cannot be gainsaid. Taking into account the whole Christian economy, the incentive to virtue furnished by the example and teaching of our divine Lord, the immensely enhanced motives for love of God, the abundant streams of grace which flow to men through the channels of the Sacraments and all good works, nobody can

¹ Deut. xxx., 11–16.

² Ibid. vi., 5.

³ Cf. Matth. xxii., 37.

deny that the Christian is very much more fortunate in the matter of facilities for attaining salvation than were those who lived before the coming of the Saviour. The purpose of these trite remarks will be evident from what is to follow.

Before the institution of the Sacraments one who fell into mortal sin could secure forgiveness and regain justification only by an act of perfect contrition. So the theologians teach to a man. For Sacred Scripture allows no other motive than perfect love of God as sufficient. In his parting injunction to his people, Moses said: "And when thou shalt seek there the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, yet so if thou seek him with all thy heart, and all the affliction of thy soul."⁴ "I love them that love me," says Wisdom;⁵ "The wickedness of the wicked shall not hurt him, in what day soever he shall turn from his wickedness."⁶ In committing sin, the sinner turns away from God; in repenting, he turns back to him, is converted. Perfect contrition remits sin of itself, for in the Old Law there was no other means.

Coming to the New Dispensation, we find that among the powers given by Christ to his Apostles and their successors in the ministry, was the power to remit sin. But we must note that the granting of this power did not abrogate the necessity of repentance. "Except you do

⁴ Deut. iv., 29.

⁵ Proverbs, viii., 17.

⁶ Ezech. xxxiii., 12.

penance, you shall all likewise perish,"⁷ are the decisive words of our Lord. And when Christ's kingdom had been established, and he himself had departed whence he had come, his Apostles were no less emphatic as regards the need for sorrow for sin. "Be penitent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out,"⁸ were the words of St. Peter to one of his first audiences. And it is to be remarked that these exhortations to penance in the New Testament are couched in the same terms as those in the Old, as if to imply that there is no ground for the contention that a lesser penance would now suffice where formerly a greater was needed. But this is merely by the way. The main fact we have to consider is that Christ instituted a Sacrament of Penance, giving to his Church the power of binding and loosing, forgiving sin or withholding forgiveness. This great power was promised to St. Peter on the solemn occasion of the latter's confession to the divinity of Christ: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven;"⁹ and in practically the same words Jesus addressed all the Apostles.¹⁰ And the promise was fulfilled after the Resurrection

⁷ Luke xiii., 3.

⁸ Acts iii., 19.

⁹ Matth. xvi., 18-19.

¹⁰ Matth. xviii., 18.

in words the meaning of which could not be mistaken : “ Receive ye the Holy Ghost : whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.” ¹¹ That a real power of forgiving sin was thus conferred the Church has always understood—it is not necessary to cite any authority. That the power was to be exercised by a judicial act is also a dogma of faith, according to the anathema levelled by the Council of Trent against those who maintain that “ the Sacramental absolution by the priest is not a judicial act, but a mere ministry of pronouncing and declaring the remission of the penitent’s sins.” ¹²

Hence we have two doctrines, vouched for by the constant and definite teaching of the Church, the first holding that sin is not remitted without contrition, the second that the Church has power to remit it by means of the Sacrament of Penance. If contrition be required, and if it suffices, what efficacy can the Sacrament have? And if, on the other hand, the Sacrament really effects the remission of sin, if it be really a Sacrament of the dead, giving new life to the soul, is this remissive efficacy totally independent of the dispositions of the sinner? To the latter question the answer is an emphatic negative—absolution

¹¹ John xx., 22-23.

¹² Si quis dixerit, absolutionem sacramentalem sacerdotis non esse actum iudiciale, sed nudum ministerium pronuntiandi et declarandi, remissa esse peccata confitentis, modo tantum credat se esse absolutum . . . A. S. *De Sac. Poenit.*, Sess. xiv., Can. 9 ; Denz., n. 919.

will avail only for those who have a contrite heart. But if this be the case, does it not seem that absolution is of little use? For if the sinner has contrition, his sins are thereby already remitted; and if he has not contrition, absolution will avail him nothing.

Now-a-days our catechisms overcome the difficulty with amazing ease. Without the Sacrament, they inform us, justification can be attained only by perfect contrition, conceived from the motive of perfect love of God as good in himself; whereas with the Sacrament a lesser motive of sorrow will suffice; imperfect contrition, or attrition, although insufficient of itself to obtain forgiveness of grievous sin, will, when coupled with the Sacrament, secure its remission. Thus are reconciled the two apparently conflicting doctrines—the necessity of contrition and the efficacy of absolution. And even when the penitent approaches the Sacrament with perfect contrition, and, therefore, with his sins already remitted in virtue of it, the absolution pronounced over him will not be a mere empty declaration of forgiveness, but will confer upon him the Sacramental grace of Penance; will, therefore, strengthen him against relapse into sin, and will, moreover, remit some of the temporal punishment still due.

All this is now the merest commonplace, contained in all our handbooks of theology and taught in our Catechisms to all Catholic children. But those with even the most elementary knowledge

of the history of the Sacrament of Penance are aware that it was not always so. This apparently fundamental teaching of the distinction between contrition and attrition, in order to account for the remissive efficacy of sacramental absolution, was unknown in the Church for upwards of eleven centuries. During all that time it was believed that the contrition required in the Sacrament of Penance was that which of itself sufficed to justify the sinner, and the theologians of those days do not seem to have adverted to the difficulty as to the rôle of absolution in the forgiveness of sin. The early commentators on the text of St. Matthew, xvi., 19: "Whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, etc.," understood, indeed, that a real power of binding and loosing was conferred upon the ministers of Christ, but they explained that the sentence by which the priest bound or loosed was not ratified by God unless it was just—that it could not make the innocent guilty, nor the guilty innocent.¹³ Further than this they did not go.

¹³ Referring to this power of binding and loosing, the Venerable Bede writes: "*Nec non episcopis et presbyteris et omni Ecclesiae idem officium committitur, quamvis quidam eorum, non recte intelligentes, arbitrentur se posse damnare innoxios, et absolvere reos, quod nequaquam possunt, sed tentantes semetipsos concessa potestate privare.*" (Migne, P. L. xcii., 79.) And Anselm of Laon, who lived into the twelfth century, did little more than echo his words: "*Claves autem regni coelorum ipsam discernendi sententiam et potentiam nominat. Potentiam, qua liget vel solvat; discretionem, qua dignos vel indignos discernat. Qui enim aliquid indigne solvit vel ligat, ut ait Gregorius, a propria potestate se privat. Si scientiam discernendi habet, nec tamen potentiam suscepit ligandi atque solvendi, neminem ligat neque solvit. Si autem potestatem accepit, nec tamen bene discernit, si quem ligat vel solvit, quamvis in conspectu hominum, tamen in conspectu Dei, qui ligatur immerito vel solvitur, nec ligatus nec solutus habetur.*" (P. L. clxii., 1396.)

The beginning of the Scholastic period was marked by a closer investigation of the problem. Not satisfied with holding in mere juxtaposition, as it were, the double doctrine of the necessity of contrition and the efficacy of absolution, various writers attempted to elaborate a theory which would co-ordinate the two. Thus we find St. Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) venturing the view that contrition justifies of itself, and that the subsequent sentence of absolution is only an external declaration of forgiveness already obtained. This is how he applied to all sinners, obliged to confess their sins to a priest, the text of St. Luke, xvii., 14, where Jesus, having been implored by the ten lepers to heal them, sends them to show themselves to the priest, and where it is recorded that on the way they were healed. Thus, reasons St. Anselm, when sinners resolve to go to confession, they thereby renounce their sins. But they must, nevertheless, confess to the priest, in order that they may have official testimony to be shown before men of the forgiveness which they had already obtained from God.¹⁴

This teaching, bold as it was, seemed to rob sacerdotal absolution of all true remissive power, and hence Hugh of St. Victor (1097-1141) endeavoured to find a remedy by making a

¹⁴ " *Dum irent, mundati sunt, quia, ex quo tendentes ad confessionem et poenitentiam, tota deliberatione mentis peccata sua damnant, et deserunt; liberantur ab eis in conspectu interni inspectoris. . . . Pervenendum tamen est ad sacerdotes, et ab eis quaerenda solutio, ut qui iam coram Deo sunt mundati, sacerdotum iudicio etiam hominibus ostendantur mundi.*" P. L. clviii., 662.

distinction between the effects of contrition and absolution. Mortal sin, he writes, fastens upon the soul a double bond: an internal bond, which is the blindness of the soul resulting from the privation of grace; and an external bond, which is the liability to eternal punishment in hell.¹⁵ Now, repentance obviously breaks the internal bond, removing the blindness of the soul, the stain of sin; it remains for the sacerdotal absolution to free the sinner from the liability to eternal punishment.¹⁶ Thus the power of the priest would be limited to the removal of the punishment due to sin, while the guilt itself would have been already removed by contrition.

Peter Lombard (+ 1160) was not slow to find fault with the doctrine that contrition did not remove the liability to eternal punishment as well as the guilt of sin. As, however, he still continued to maintain that contrition and absolution produce different effects, he was unable to improve on the position taken up by St. Anselm, according to whom contrition remits sin, as regards guilt and penalty, while absolution is a declaration that the sin has been pardoned by God. Such, at all events, is the interpretation commonly put upon his words. It must not be supposed that he meant in any way to minimise

¹⁵ "Duobus enim modis peccator ligatus est. Ligatus est obduratione mentis, ligatus est debito futurae damnationis." P. L. clxxvi., 565.

¹⁶ "Impietas namque peccati ipsa rectissime obduratio cordis accipitur, quae primum in compunctione solvitur, ut postmodum in confessione peccatum ipsum, id est, debitum damnationis absolvatur." Ibid., 568.

the power of the priest to forgive sin ; he merely emphasises the fact that sin can be forgiven by God alone.¹⁷ But at the same time it is true that God has given this power to the Church.¹⁸ In those times it would appear to have been necessary to lay special stress on the fact that sin is forgiven by God alone, for we find many writers who argue strongly against the misconception that the power of the priest was arbitrary, that he could forgive or condemn at will ; whereas in truth his pardon or condemnation was of value only in so far as it was ratified by God. The guilty cannot be made innocent, nor the innocent guilty, by merely declaring them so. The primary object of the Master of the Sentences would seem to have been to leave no room for doubt on this point. It is true, indeed, that he declares the power given to priests is a power of "showing that men are loosed or bound," but he wishes to make it clear that this is not to be used arbitrarily ; for he quotes the example of the Levitical priesthood, who did not *make* men clean or unclean, but only *decided* who were clean and who were not. If their decision were not objectively true, it mattered not in the sight of God, who always "judges according to truth." In the same way the priests of the Christian

¹⁷ Cf. Mark ii., 7-11.

¹⁸ "Hoc sane dicere ac sentire possumus, quod solus Deus dimittit peccata et retinet ; et tamen aliter ipse solvit vel ligat, aliter Ecclesia. Ipse enim per se tantum dimittit peccatum, qui et animam mundat ab interiori macula, et a debito aeternae mortis solvit." In *IV. Sent.*, Dist. xviii. 5 ; *P. L.* cxcii., 887.

dispensation "forgive or retain sins, when they judge and declare that the sins are forgiven or retained by God."¹⁹ Owing to the great authority of Peter Lombard, this view remained chiefly in vogue until well into the thirteenth century. During the remainder of the twelfth century speculation contributed little to the doctrine already laid down, if we except that Richard of St. Victor considered that the special function of absolution was to remit absolutely the sins which had been already remitted conditionally by contrition, the condition in the case being that they be subsequently submitted to the power of the keys in confession.²⁰

Nowadays it is customary to regard the teaching of the Master of the Sentences as altogether erroneous; in fact, there are some who would seem to put it in the same category as the doctrine of Luther which was condemned by the Council of Trent, that, namely, the absolution pronounced by the priest is a "mere ceremony" of declaring the sins of the penitent forgiven, and not a judicial act.²¹ But the teaching of Lombard and that of Luther are separated as

¹⁹ "In Levitico se ostendere sacerdotibus iubentur leprosi, quos illi non faciunt leprosos vel mundos, sed discernunt qui mundi vel immundi sunt. Ita et hic aperte ostenditur quod non semper sequitur Deus Ecclesiae iudicium, quae per surreptionem et ignorantiam interdum iudicat, Deus autem semper iudicat secundum veritatem. Et in remittendis vel in retinendis culpis id iuris et officii habent evangelici sacerdotes, quod olim habebant sub lege legales in curandis leprosis. Hi ergo peccata dimittunt vel retinent, dum dimissa a Deo vel retenta iudicant et ostendunt." *Ibid.*, n. 6; *P. L. cxcii.*, 887-8.

²⁰ *P. L. cxcvi.*, 1165.

²¹ *Denz.*, n. 919.

widely as the poles. For Luther the absolution of the priest is a "mere ceremony"; for Peter Lombard it is a judicial sentence.²² In condemning the Master of the Sentences we are apt to forget that we are still confronted by the same difficulty which he sought to overcome, and that we are little better able to remove it than was he. Countless numbers of the faithful, we may surely aver, approach the Sacrament of Penance with no grievous sin on their souls, either because they have committed none since their last confession or because they have repented by an act of perfect sorrow. Is the absolution pronounced over them a "mere ceremony?" The answer is prompt that it is much more. It is, we say, a confirmation of the forgiveness already received, itself efficacious to produce the same effect; it confers valuable sacramental grace; it gives an official assurance of pardon, removing the uncertainty under which the penitent might labour regarding his state in the eyes of God; it removes some of the temporal punishment due to sin. When we view the teaching of Lombard in the light of the knowledge of his time, we shall be more ready to make allowances for his belief that contrition and absolution acted independently and successively, each producing a distinct and separate effect.²³

So far there has been no question regarding

²² Cf. *supra*, pp. 77, 78.

²³ Cf. Hurter, *Theol. Dogm. Comp.*, Tom. iii., *De Poenit.*, nn. 463, 464; 12th Ed., 1908.

the necessity of perfect contrition, whether with or without the Sacrament of Penance. A notable stage in the history of the problem is marked by the introduction of the word *attrition*. According to Palmieri,²⁴ the word is first found in use in the writings of Alanus of Lille,²⁵ who, however, understood by attrition an imperfect sorrow for sin, from some inferior motive, insufficient to secure justification even when conjoined with the Sacrament; this imperfect sorrow is inadequate, the author explains, either because the sinner does not make the necessary resolve to avoid sin in the future, or because he does not confess it. The same distinction between contrition and attrition is made by William of Auvergne (+ 1248), who taught that attrition prepares the way for contrition, and that without contrition sin is not forgiven. The penitent, therefore, from being *attrite* becomes *contrite*, but as to how this transformation takes place there is no explanation forthcoming. St. Bonaventure, indeed, attempted to solve the problem by distinguishing the two forms in the sacerdotal absolution—the deprecatory form, *Misereatur tui*, etc., and the indicative, *Ego te absolvo*. In the

²⁴ *De Sacr. Poenitentiae, Thesis xxxii.*

²⁵ + 1203. He is called "Alanus de Insulis" by the editor in Migne. The following is the passage referred to:—"Malum, quod est in homine, . . . aut continuatione augetur, si homo perseveret actualiter in peccato, aut *attritione* remittitur, ut quando aliquis dolet se hoc commisisse, cessans ab opere, quamvis non poeniteat perfecte; aut *contritione* dimittitur, quando plenarie de peccato convertitur. Sunt enim multi, qui dolent se peccasse, et corde *atteruntur*, non tamen plene *conteruntur*, nec firmum habent propositum non relabendi, nec ore confitentur." P. L. ccx., 665.

deprecatory form the priest implores God to transform the penitent's attrition into contrition, which being done, his sins are remitted, and it remains for the indicative form to remit the temporal punishment that may be still due.²⁶ No writer of the time ventured to assert that attrition of itself was sufficient; whatever be the dispositions of the penitent on approaching the tribunal of Penance, he must have perfect sorrow before he will obtain forgiveness.

It seems to be generally assumed that St. Thomas marks an epoch in the history of this troublesome question, yet an examination of his writings reveals the fact that he contributed very little in a positive way to elucidate the problem, and he adopts to a considerable extent the teaching of Peter Lombard.²⁷ It must be admitted, indeed, that he puts the issue in a clearer light by a closer co-ordination of the facts, and by his contention that the Sacrament of Penance should be regarded as a unity, deriving its effects not from one or other of its component parts, but from the combined action of them all. It is unfortunate that we have not the product of his more mature thought on the matter under consideration, for the *Summa* breaks off where the treatment of the parts of Penance begins, and the missing portions have been supplied by the

²⁶ *Lib. iv. Sent.*, Dist. xviii., Pars. i., Art. ii., Quaest. i. Cf. *Dict. de Theol. Cath.*, Tom. i., Col. 175, 176, s. v. *Absolution*, and *Ibid.*, Col. 2236, 2237, s. v. *Attrition*.

²⁷ Cf. *Summ. Theol., Suppl.*, q. 18, a. 1, c., and *ad* 1.

disciples of the Angelic Doctor from his Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard.

It has been observed that, whereas Peter Lombard and most of the writers of his time laid special emphasis on the Scriptural texts which attribute justification entirely to the repentance of the sinner, St. Thomas, on the other hand, was struck very forcibly by those passages which record the giving of the power to remit sin by Christ to the Apostles. Thus, it is claimed, he gives a real meaning to the power of the keys, unlike those of his predecessors, who regarded it as merely the power to declare forgiveness. For, in accordance with the general sacramental principle that the Sacraments of the New Law effect what they signify, the words of absolution, "I absolve thee, etc.," declare the penitent absolved not merely by signifying it, but by effecting it.²⁸ The Sacrament of Penance, therefore, really effects the remission of sin, and as the perfection of everything is derived from its form,²⁹ so it may be said that the remissive efficacy of the sacrament proceeds from the absolution. The sacrament, however, must be taken as a whole, producing its effect not only by virtue of its form,

²⁸ "Ista expositio : *Ego te absolvo*, id est, *absolutum ostendo*, quantum ad aliquid quidem vera est, non tamen est perfecta. Sacramenta enim novae legis non solum significant, sed etiam faciunt quod significant. Unde sicut sacerdos baptizando aliquem, ostendit hominem interius ablutum per verba et facta, et non solum significative, sed etiam effective, ita etiam cum dicit : *Ego te absolvo*, ostendit hominem absolutum non solum significative, sed etiam effective." *Summ. Theol.* 3^a, q. 84, a. 3, ad 5^m.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, a. 3, c.

but also by virtue of its matter—the matter being, in the view of St. Thomas, the acts of the penitent—for the matter must be directed to the power of the keys.³⁰

While this is so, it nevertheless remains true, as Peter Lombard held, that the priest does not really remit the guilt of sin, for this belongs to God alone, and the priest acts only as his instrument. But as some real influence in the production of the effect is attributable to an instrument, it follows that the power of the keys has something to do with the remission of guilt, *not by causing it, but by disposing towards it*. In a matter of such importance it may be well to quote the exact words of the Angelic Doctor. Having compared the power of the keys in relation to the effect of penance with the power of the water in regard to the effect of baptism, he goes on to explain that baptism requires no previous preparation in the recipient, unless he be an adult ; in which case the preparation sometimes precedes the reception of the sacrament, and is sufficient of itself to secure justification ; but sometimes it is simultaneous with the baptism, and then it may be said that the remission of guilt is obtained by the reception of the sacrament. But in the case of Penance, the grace of remission is never given without preparation on the part of the penitent. And the text continues : “ Hence

³⁰ Ibid., q. 86, a. 6, c.

the power of the keys operates unto the remission of guilt either by reason of the desire for the exercise of this power, or by its actual exercise, just as water acts in baptism. But as baptism is not the principal agent, but an instrument, not *causing* grace, even instrumentally, but disposing to the grace through which remission is obtained, so it is with the power of the keys. Hence God alone, absolutely speaking, remits guilt; and by his power baptism acts instrumentally, as an inanimate instrument, and the priest (in penance) as an animate instrument. . . . It is clear, therefore, that the power of the keys has something to do with the remission of guilt, not as being the cause of it, but as disposing towards it. Wherefore, if before absolution a person were not perfectly disposed to receive grace, he would obtain grace in the confession and sacramental absolution, if he placed no obstacle in its way."²¹

The doctrine of St. Thomas, therefore, is that while the penitent who has contrition before approaching the sacrament is already justified

²¹ "Unde virtus clavium operatur ad culpae remissionem vel in voto existens, vel in actu se exercens, sicut et aqua baptismi. Sed sicut baptismus non agit sicut principale agens, sed sicut instrumentum, non quidem pertingens ad ipsam gratiae susceptionem causandam, etiam instrumentaliter, sed disponens ad gratiam, per quam fit remissio culpae, ita est de potestate clavium. Unde solus Deus remittit per se culpam; et in virtute eius agit instrumentaliter baptismus, ut instrumentum inanimatum, et sacerdos ut instrumentum animatum. . . . Et sic patet quod potestas clavium ordinatur aliquo modo ad remissionem culpae, non sicut causans, sed sicut disponens ad eam. Unde si ante absolutionem aliquis non fuisset perfecte dispositus ad gratiam suscipiendam, in ipsa confessione et absolutione sacramentali gratiam consequeretur, si obicem non poneret." *In iv. Dist. 18, q. 1, a. 5, Solutio i.* The passage is repeated verbatim in the Supplement to the *Summa*, q. 18, a. 1. The same teaching is found in *Quodlibet iv.*, a. 10, and in *Opusc. De Forma Absolutionis*, Cap. ii.

prior to its reception, it may also happen that a penitent will not have this justifying contrition, but an inferior kind of sorrow. And if such a one puts no obstacle in the way, he will receive the grace of justification. Are we then to conclude that St. Thomas is before his time in teaching that what we now call attrition suffices for the remission of sin when joined with the sacrament? We should be entirely unwarranted in doing so. The Angelic Doctor was convinced that there is no justification, even with the sacrament, unless the penitent has contrition from the motive of perfect charity.³² He believed, like his predecessors, that there is an imperfect sorrow which in the sacrament becomes perfect—that the attrite penitent is made contrite. There is no explanation of how this transformation is wrought; it is not that the same act of attrition becomes contrition, as informal faith becomes formal with the accession of sanctifying grace; but somehow or other, under the influence of the sacrament, the penitent rises from the imperfect to the perfect act of sorrow.³³ But when he comes to consider the really crucial case, that, namely, in which the penitent, at the precise moment of absolution, has not exchanged his attrition for contrition, St. Thomas finds himself obliged to declare that in such circumstances the sinner does not obtain pardon; he is a *fictus*, that is to say, he lacks

³² Cf. *Dict. de Théol. Cath.*, Tom. i., Col. 179.

³³ *Summa Theol.*, *Suppl.*, q. 1, a. 3.

the necessary dispositions for absolution. The absolution, however, is not useless ; for as soon as the penitent has contrition the sins which he previously confessed will be remitted in virtue of the absolution already received ; and he will not be obliged to repeat his confession, but merely to mention his lack of dispositions, when next he approaches the sacred tribunal.³⁴

From these lengthy extracts it ought to be plain to the reader, if he does not bring to bear upon them knowledge that belongs to a later period, that St. Thomas cannot be quoted as an advocate of the modern teaching on the sufficiency of attrition with the sacrament. A detached sentence here and there, taken apart from its context, might indeed be invoked as proof that the great Doctor anticipated the conclusions which are now current,³⁵ but it is useless to attempt to interpret such as these in a manner which their setting does not for a moment allow. Hence, in concluding this Chapter, we may call to mind the assertion, referred to at the beginning, that the New Dispensation claims superiority over the Old in the ease with which pardon for sin can now

³⁴ "Secundum quod [confessio] est pars sacramenti, sic ordinat confitentem ad sacerdotem, qui habet claves Ecclesiae, qui per confessionem conscientiam confitentis cognoscit ; et secundum hoc confessio potest esse etiam in eo qui non est contritus, quia potest peccata sua pandere sacerdoti, et clavibus Ecclesiae se subicere ; et quamvis tunc non percipiat absolutionis fructum, tamen recedente fictione percipere incipiet, sicut etiam in aliis sacramentis est. Unde non tenetur iterare confessionem, qui fictus accedit, sed tenetur postmodum fictionem suam confiteri." *Summ. Theol., Suppl.*, q. 9, a. 1. Cf. *Dict. de Théol. Cath.*, Tom. i., Col. 179.

³⁵ Cf. St. Alphonsus, *Theol. Mor.*, Lib. vi., Tract. iv., n. 440.

be obtained, owing principally to the fact that attrition with the sacrament suffices where formerly perfect contrition was required; from the preceding pages it appears that such an idea was unknown until after the time of the great scholastic writers of the Middle Ages.

NOTE.

It had been originally intended, in connexion with this and the following chapter, to go somewhat fully into the history of the formula *ex attrito fit contritus*, but it has been found impossible to do so within due limits. In addition to the occasional references in the text, it has been thought well to submit the following quotation from Morinus, which is all the more interesting in view of the fact that it dates from a century later than the Council of Trent:—"Infinitarum quaestionum fons alter, lis enim litem parere solet, huius rei fuit inquisitio, *Qua ratione Attritio virtute Sacramenti fiat Contritio*. Ab annis trecentis et quinquaginta (*i.e.*, from about the year 1300), in hanc usque diem acerrime de hac quaestione in scholis disputatum est, nec umquam ab eo temporis deferbuit disputatio, sed semper incaluit, viresque acquisivit eundo. Varii Doctores variis modis hunc nodum enodare tentaverunt. Septem variae de hac enodatione iactantur sententiae; sed antequam illas enarro Lectorem notare velim antiquam sententiam de necessitate Contritionis ante Absolutionem concipiendae toto illo tempore ad usque Concilium Tridentinum aliis omnibus sigillatim sumptis praevaluisse, maximosque viros et magno numero paulo ante Concilium Tridentinum hanc sententiam mordicus defendisse, et alias improbasse. Sed post Concilium Tridentinum eae Sententiae quae Attritionem sufficere docent antiquae praevaluerunt, maiore Doctorum parte sensim in hanc sententiam inclinante, et ab antiqua declinante ut nimium severa et efficacia Sacramentorum non satis tribuente. Non defuerunt tamen Doctores insignes, post illud tempus in hunc usque diem, nec contemnendo numero, quorum aliqui Concilio interfuerunt, qui antiquam sententiam propugnauerunt, aliisque longe praeposerunt." *Commentarius Historicus de Disciplina in Administratione Sacramenti Poenitentiae*, Lib. viii., Cap. iii., n. xii.

Cf. also Dominicus Soto, *In iv. Sent.*, Dist. xvii., q. 2, a. 5; Suarez, *De Poenit.*, Disp. xviii., Sect. v., n. 7; Disp. xx., Sect. i., n. 10 *sqq.*; Sect. iii., n. 15; De Lugo, *De Poenit.*, Disp. v., n. 145; Salmanticenses, *De Poenit.*, Disp. vii., Dub. i., n. 62; Billuart, *De Poenit.*, Diss. iv., Art. iv. A number of references will be found in *Dict. de Théol. Cath.*, Tom. i., Col. 2256-58.

CHAPTER VI.

CONTRITION AND ATTRITION.

(b)—*The Council of Trent and subsequent teaching.*

It was on the doctrine of justification that Luther first broke with the teaching of the Church, and this it was which formed the main theme of his discourses and writings in the promulgation of his new gospel. Driven by the laxity of his conduct to seek solace in a system which would attribute no meritorious value to good works, he elaborated the doctrine that by faith alone we are justified, that the sinner has only to put all his trust in the merits of Christ in order to have his sins covered over and forgotten. The Council of Trent was, therefore, called upon to set forth the Catholic position in a clear and unmistakable light, but while defining the orthodox teaching on justification, the Fathers of the Council did not conceive it to be their duty to decide between the merits of the rival Catholic views on various matters of greater or less importance. Thus it is that theologians have been left ample scope for speculation, within the limits of defined dogma, while the faithful are provided with a singularly clear and altogether adequate refutation of the Lutheran errors.

With the general doctrine of the decrees on

justification we have no concern here ; we are interested merely in the rôle of charity in the process by which the sinner becomes again a friend of God, adopted into the divine sonship. It is obvious that in order to become a friend of God one must love him ; friendship is a reciprocal benevolence. It is true that God could condone sin without retraction on the part of the sinner, but he could not be a friend of one who remained averted from him. In order, then, to obtain justification, the sinner must break completely with the sins which separate him from God, virtually hating them as the opposite of his own eternal happiness, which consists in the possession of God. Now, the question is, can the sinner hate his sins so as to obtain forgiveness of them and become a friend of God without, at the same time, by the same act, loving God with a love of charity ? At first sight one would think that there was no possible reply to this question but a direct negative, and this, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, was the belief of the Church for at least twelve centuries. But we must take into account the fact that the Sacrament of Penance was instituted for the remission of sin, and that, consequently, we are now provided with a double method of obtaining justification ; the one, *ex opere operantis*, when of ourselves we turn to God by an act of perfect charity, and the other, *ex opere operato*, by virtue of the remissive efficacy of the Sacrament of Penance. The question is, when we seek

justification by the latter method, may we dispense altogether with an act of the love of God, the necessary disposition for the former? The distinction between contrition and attrition was, as we have seen, of a standing long anterior to the Council of Trent, but the medieval theologians, who were the first to use it, remained convinced that there was no forgiveness for sin unless the penitent had perfect contrition at the moment of absolution, while they were unable to explain the precise method of the transition from the less perfect to the more perfect act. Later on, it came to be commonly taught and believed that attrition, with the sacrament, was sufficient to obtain remission of sin; and the final stage of development of the doctrine is represented by the present-day widespread, though by no means universal, teaching, that with the sacrament no love of God is required, the contention being that no such love of God is necessarily contained in the motives of attrition, namely, the ugliness of sin and the fear of punishment. In a matter upon which so much has been written it would be impossible, even if it were desirable, to set forth every phase of the question. Our present requirements will be satisfied by a review, as brief as possible, of one of the most important, because most practical, controversies which still engage the attention of the theological world.

The mode of preparation for justification is set forth in the Sixth Chapter of the Sixth Session

of the Council of Trent. To save the trouble of reference, it will be better to quote the words :

Disponuntur autem ad ipsam iustitiam, dum excitati divina gratia et adiuti, fidem *ex auditu* (Rom. 10, 17) concipientes, libere moventur in Deum, credentes vera esse, quae divinitus revelata et promissa sunt, atque illud imprimis, a Deo iustificari impium per gratiam eius, "*per redemptionem, quae est in Christo Jesu*" (Rom. 3, 24) ; et, dum peccatores se esse intelligentes, a divinae iustitiae timore, quo utiliter concutiuntur, ad considerandam Dei misericordiam se convertendo in spem eriguntur, fidentes Deum sibi propter Christum propitium fore, illumque tanquam omnis iustitiae fontem diligere incipiunt, ac propterea moventur adversus peccata per odium aliquod et detestationem, hoc est per eam poenitentiam, quam ante baptismum agi oportet.¹

The important words for our present purpose are those which require from sinners seeking justification that they "begin to love God as the source of all justice." Now, the use of the word *diligere* should itself be a sufficient indication that there is reference here to an act of charity ;² but all doubt is removed by the statement of Pallavicini, who in his History of the Council informs us that in the first draft of the decree no mention was made of love of God, and that it was recommended that "some act of charity should be inserted." The insertion of the words requiring an act of charity gave rise to some controversy, but finally the added clause was retained, with the observation that there was not question of the *habit* of charity, but that it was

¹ Denz., n. 798.

² Cf. Lehmkühl, *Theol. Mor.*, II., n. 391.

thought well to join with faith and hope some *act* of love, which act, therefore, obviously precedes the infusion of the habit of charity. Further, in regard to the sequence of the acts in this preparatory process, it was recorded that "although some detestation of sin precedes hope, yet the hatred which disposes to justification since it cannot exist without hope and love, follows hope."³

A great number of theologians endeavour to maintain that the "beginning of love" here mentioned must be understood to signify, not love of charity, but an act of the virtue of hope; hope being for them love of concupiscence of God. But an entirely different view of the virtue has been put forward in a previous Chapter, a view which, it seems clear, derives considerable confirmation from the present decree of the Council of Trent. For does not the decree explicitly declare that an act of hope precedes this "beginning of love"? Passing from the fear of divine justice, says the Council, by which they are profitably disturbed, to the consideration of the mercy of God, sinners are stimulated to hope, trusting that God will look with favour on them for Christ's sake, and then they begin to

³ Pallavicini, *Conc. Trid. Hist.*, Lib. viii., Cap. xiii, nn. 12, 13. For the convenience of readers, the extracts from Pallavicini's History which are relevant to the matter in hand will be found printed at the end of the present Chapter. They require very little comment, and should be enough to put an end for ever to some of the extravagant views which have been advanced in regard to the teaching of the Council of Trent on justification.

love him as the source of all justice. Surely it will not be contended that the act of being "stimulated to hope" is the same as the act of "beginning to love"? And if there were a shadow of doubt on the point, it should be amply satisfied by the testimony of Pallavicini, that the Fathers of the Council wished to include the three theological virtues in the description of the process of justification, and deliberately inserted a clause dealing with an act of charity.

If the sufficiency of love of hope, as it is called, be denied, it follows *a fortiori* that the contention of those who would regard the "beginning of love" as an act of attrition cannot be sustained. In fact, the motive of fear, declared by its supporters to be sufficient for attrition, has been already mentioned as a prior step in the process; hence, here we must postulate some real love of God from the motive of charity.

Against this view of the question the difficulty will be immediately suggested that if the "beginning of love" alluded to in the decree is to be understood as a love of charity, the process of justification will be there and then complete, and the ensuing acts, including the reception of baptism or penance, are altogether superfluous. For it cannot be held that one who has elicited an act of charity can still be in the state of sin,⁴

⁴ Cf. condemned proposition of Baius: "Homo exsistens in peccato mortali, sive in reatu aeternae damnationis, potest habere veram caritatem: et caritas, etiam perfecta, potest consistere cum reatu aeternae damnationis." Denz., n. 1070.

and hence, should this opinion be correct, the chief function of baptism and penance as sacraments of the dead, capable of imparting first justification, is a mere illusion.

It must be admitted that the difficulty is serious ; but it is not peculiar to the view that has been put forward, and it is not new. The Fathers of the Council of Trent, who sanctioned the decree under discussion, were fully alive to the problem, and we may well shelter behind their authority in declaring that the act of charity referred to does not imply "the possession of, but merely the seeking after, justice," thereby clearly admitting that an act of charity precedes the infusion of the habit.⁵

In the fourteenth Session of the Council, Chapter IV., the doctrine on contrition and attrition is stated, and it is around this passage that the real controversy rages. Although the words are familiar to everybody, it will be well to have them before our eyes. Having defined and explained contrition in general, as at all times necessary for the remission of sin, the Council continues :—

"Docet praeterea, etsi contritionem hanc aliquando caritate perfectam esse contingat, hominemque Deo reconciliare, priusquam hoc sacramentum actu suscipiatur, ipsam nihilominus reconciliationem ipsi contritioni sine sacramenti voto, quod in illa includitur, non esse adscribendam. Illam vero contritionem imperfectam, quae attritio dicitur, quoniam vel ex turpitudinis peccati consideratione vel ex gehennae

⁵ Pallavicini, *Op. Cit.*, Lib. viii., Cap. xiv., n. 3 ; *cf. infra*, p. 110.

et poenarum metu communiter concipitur, si voluntatem peccandi excludat cum spe veniae, declarat non solum non facere hominem hypocritam et magis peccatorem, verum etiam donum Dei esse et Spiritus Sancti impulsum, non adhuc quidem inhabitantis, sed tantum moventis, quo poenitens adiutus viam sibi ad iustitiam parat. Et quamvis sine sacramento poenitentiae per se ad iustificationem perducere peccatorem nequeat, tamen eum ad Dei gratiam in sacramento poenitentiae impetrandam disponit. Hoc enim timore utiliter concussi Ninivitae ad Ionaë praedicationem plenam terroribus poenitentiam egerunt et misericordiam a Domino impetrarunt.”⁶

In this passage, it is claimed by some, the Council of Trent definitely affirms the sufficiency of attrition as a motive of sorrow in the Sacrament of Penance, without any love of God. A vast amount of erudition has been brought to bear on the problem, but instead of contributing in any great degree to the solution of it, the theologians seem to have over-clouded the comparatively clear exposition of the Fathers of Trent in their efforts to bring the Council into line with the views which they themselves defend. As a matter of fact, the record of Pallavicini plainly shows that there is scarcely any shade of opinion which had not its supporters within the Council. And, after mentioning some of the individual expressions of view, the historian concludes with regard to the main issue: “Indeed, as far as I can gather from the Acts, the purpose of the theologians was to condemn the error of the heretics who reprobated the fear of punishment as wrong, but not to decide the scholastic

⁶ Denz., nn. 897, 898.

question as to whether such fear, not only apart from perfect contrition but even without any imperfect love, is sufficient for the remission of sins in the sacrament. This is perfectly clear from the approval of the Council in establishing the doctrine of this article in Chapter IV., where it is said that the penance of the Ninivites, which sprang from fear, was of some avail to them ; whereas it is certain that at that time, when the Sacrament of Penance did not yet exist, such penance conceived from fear by no means sufficed of itself to remove sin, but had power merely to secure new grace, by the aid of which the effect of charity might be obtained, for all admit that charity was necessary for justification before the New Law.”⁷

There can be no doubt, therefore, of the divergence of views which prevailed among the members of the Council, and in framing the decree due account was taken of this divergence, for the Fathers were determined to avoid any pronouncement on matters of domestic controversy. In point of fact, whereas the first draft of the decree affirmed that attrition was sufficient with the Sacrament—(*attritionem sufficere ad Sacramenti huius constitutionem*)—the form which was ultimately approved speaks of it as *disposing* the sinner to obtain grace in the Sacrament—*ad Dei gratiam in sacramento poenitentiae impetrandam disponit*. And as if to

⁷ *Op. Cit.*, Lib. xii., Cap. x., nn. 24 sqq. ; cf. *infra*, p. 112.

further emphasise the prevalent vacillation, the rejected draft, which declared attrition sufficient, added that such attrition could scarcely exist without some love of God, thereby conceding the whole position to the opposing side.⁸

Hence it is idle for disputants to claim in their support the authority of the Council of Trent ; and it is strange to find so many confidently affirming that the Council has, not indeed defined the point, but for all practical purposes placed it beyond question. A recent writer does not hesitate to say, referring to the alteration in the final draft of the decree, that, in the context, the substituted word *disponit* is equivalent to the rejected word *sufficit* ;⁹ that, consequently, the Council merely avoided condemning in words what it really condemned in fact. Why, if so, did not the theologians who wrote immediately after the Council, and who presumably were in a better position to diagnose the situation than we are now, blazon forth to the world that the view which they maintained, of the sufficiency of attrition without any love of God, had the formal approval of the Council of Trent ? While it is true that many theologians invoked the authority of the Council in their favour, a century later we find opinion as sharply divided as ever. There were some who required for the remission

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ " L'étude raisonnée du contexte nous permet de répondre que le mot *disponit* equivant à *sufficit*, parce qu'il signifie la disposition suffisante pour la validité du sacrement." *Dict. de Théol. Cath.*, Tom. i., Col. 2247, s. v. *Attrition*.

of sin with the sacrament some love of charity, arguing from the "*diligere incipiunt*" of the Council; among these were Cardinal Bellarmine, Berti, and, though not in the same sense, Billuart. Others there were who required with the sacrament, not a love of charity, but love of concupiscence or hope, which in their view differed from love of charity. And, finally, at the other extreme was the party who contended that sorrow conceived from fear of hell alone, without any form of love of God, sufficed with the sacrament; although, as we shall presently see, the supporters of this view are by no means thorough-going in their defence of it, and in the last resort are obliged to admit that fear of hell is efficacious for remission only in so far as it necessarily implies love of the opposite good, which is the possession of God. Those who adhered to the first-mentioned position were called "*Contritionists*"; the adherents of the latter two "*Attritionists*."¹⁰

One of the land-marks in the history of the controversy is the famous decree of Alexander VII. forbidding the rival disputants to qualify opponents with theological censure. The occasion of this intervention of the Pope was the very acrimonious manner in which the question was debated in Belgium. It would seem that the "*Contritionist*"

¹⁰ If the main thesis of this book be true, that all love of God which can be ranked as theological belongs to charity, there would be no difference in principle between the first and second of the views described, and the appellation "*contritionist*" might be applied with just as much, or as little, propriety to the partisans of the latter as of the former.

view, requiring for the sacrament the beginning of charity, found favour with the Theological Faculty in Louvain, from which it was spread by the Belgian clergy throughout the country. Thus we find the Bishop of Mechlin in 1637, and the Bishop of Namur in 1659, urging their confessors to insist on something more than attrition in confession. But in 1661 a Flemish Catechism appeared, with the recommendation of the Jesuits, in which sorrow from the motive of the fear of hell was declared sufficient with the sacrament to secure remission. The local clergy raised an outcry against this teaching, and were supported by the Louvain professors. Two Augustinian priests, Christian Wolf and Francis Farvaques, composed learned treatises to prove that the offending catechism had misinterpreted the Council of Trent.¹¹ In the following year a reply to these two works appeared from the hand of Fr. Le Dent, S.J., who, it would appear, did not hesitate to accuse his opponents of Jansenism.¹² Both sides felt aggrieved at the charges of heterodoxy levelled against them, and were anxious for a condemnation of their opponents by Rome.

¹¹ *Dissertatio dogmatica de germano ac avito sensu ss. patrum universae semper Ecclesiae ac sacros. praesertim Trid. synodi circa Christianam Contritionem et Attritionem*, by Christian Wolf. Louvain, 1666; and *Quaestio quodlibetica de Attritione, seu quae fuerit mens Concilii Tridentini de sufficientia Attritionis servilis in Sacramento Poenitentiae*, by Francis Farvaques, Louvain, 1666.

¹² *De Attritione ex metu gehennae eiusque cum Sacr. Poenit. sufficientia iuxta mentem s. conc. Trid. adversus Chr. Lupi Dissertationem Dogmaticam et Quaestionem quodlibeticam* Fr. Farvaques, O. Erem. S. Aug., Mechlin, 1667.

But the Pope condemned nothing. He was concerned, not with the decision of a problem which divided the greatest theologians into hostile camps, but with the interests of the faithful at large, who must have taken no small scandal from the bitter exchanges of the rival schools. The decree, therefore, which was published in May, 1667, merely enjoined on the disputants the necessity of moderation, commanding them to avoid attaching theological censures to the opinions of their opponents: "His Holiness by this decree, in the virtue of holy obedience, and under pain of excommunication enjoin on each and every one of the faithful of whatever rank or dignity, should they in future write on the subject of attrition, or publish books or writings, teach, preach, or in any other way instruct penitents or pupils or others, not to dare to brand with theological censure, or with any term of injury or offence, either of the two opinions—that which denies the necessity of some love of God in the aforesaid attrition conceived from fear of hell, and which to-day seems more common among scholastics; or that which affirms the necessity of such love—until the Holy See shall have defined something on the matter."¹³ No definition has since appeared, and speculation still continues, bereft, however, of the bitterness of the days of Alexander VII.

But even the papal decree has been used by

¹³ Denz., n. 1146.

the contending theologians in their own favour. The "Contritionists" were vindicated from the charge of Jansenism, while the "Attritionists" triumphantly pointed to the fact that the Pope had declared their view the more common, thus lending it the support of his own private authority, and the controversy went on as before between the Jesuit Le Dent and the Augustinian Farvaques. It should not be necessary to emphasise the fact that the Augustinian writers insisted on a love of charity with attrition, not what is called love of concupiscence or hope ; and hence it is idle for some theologians to urge that the Pope, while not declaring their view devoid of probability, and while approving of it in so far as to allow the continuance of the discussion, meant only to tolerate the position which demanded love of concupiscence.¹⁴

Of the theologians who have written since the Council of Trent, the vast majority, it is well known, maintain that sorrow for sin through fear of hell alone is sufficient in the Sacrament of Penance, but it is not to be inferred from this that love of God is completely excluded. In fact, most of these writers avoid facing the problem squarely, saying that in the ultimate analysis fear of hell is equivalent in some sense to love of God, and that, whatever may be held in theory, the rival views differ scarcely at all in practice. We may take Suarez as a typical

¹⁴ Cf. La Croix, *Theol. Mor.*, Lib. vi., Pars. ii., n. 875.

defender of the "Attritionist" position. He assigns as the reason why fear of hell is good—which only heretics will deny—that "fear of any evil derives its character, and consequently its goodness, from the good to which such an evil is opposed. For . . . evil is hated because of good. Hence from love or desire of good arises hatred or avoidance of evil, such as fear. Now, the good to which the evil of hell is opposed is *per se* and most rightly lovable, because it is life eternal itself, and final beatitude, which is lovable on its own account."¹⁵ A little further on Suarez inquires from what virtue springs the hatred of sin from the motive of fear of hell, and he enumerates several opinions, concluding with his own view that "this act pertains to the virtue of hope; for the love of a good and the hatred of a contrary evil spring from the same principle. Since, therefore, this act is altogether based on fear of hell, and as hell is directly opposed to the eternal life which is the end of hope, it follows that this act pertains to the same virtue, and possesses the same supernatural character."¹⁶

¹⁵ "Timor alicuius mali sumit rationem suam, consequenterque honestatem, ex bono illo, cui tale malum opponitur, nam . . . malum ratione boni odio habetur. Unde ex amore, vel desiderio boni, oritur odium, vel fuga mali, qualis est timor. At vero bonum illud, cui gehennae malum opponitur, est per se et honestissime amabile, quia est ipsa vita aeterna, et beatitudo ultima, de cuius ratione est, ut sit propter se diligibilis." *De Poenit.*, Disp. v., Sect. ii., n. 4.

¹⁶ "Dicendum ergo est, iuxta principia a nobis supra posita, hunc actum pertinere ad virtutem spei; nam eiusdem principii est amare aliquod bonum, et odio habere contrarium malum; cum ergo hic actus fundetur potissime in timore gehennae, quae directe opponitur vitae aeternae, quam spes intendit, fit, ut huiusmodi actus ad eandem virtutem pertineat, et eandem supernaturalitatem habeat." *Ibid.*, n. 10.

Now, if Suarez is prepared to defend sorrow for sin from the motive of fear of hell only because such sorrow is equivalent to love of eternal happiness, he will find nobody to question the sufficiency of it ; not alone must it be said to be good and sufficient, but it is really the highest form of sorrow. For, according to the teaching of St. Thomas, love of final happiness, tending to the last end, the pursuit of the infinite good on its own account and not leading to any further good, is an act of the virtue of charity. Suarez, on the other hand, regards love of final happiness as an act of the virtue of hope, hope for him being love of concupiscence of God ; but this theory, we have already observed, is open to so many difficulties that in recent times theologians seem more and more inclined to abandon it. And if it be abandoned, the reasoning of Suarez in the present instance would oblige us to regard hatred of sin from fear of hell as an act of divine charity ; and however consoling it would be for the penitent sinner to feel that his motives, when apparently the lowest, were in reality the loftiest of all, we must admit that Suarez would allow him no such solace.

If we devoted to this matter the space which it would require, we should be exceeding the limits imposed upon us by the purpose of this book. The reader who wishes to pursue further investigations on the point will find abundant material in any of the larger theological works, and he will

rise from the study of it, we venture to say, convinced that few theologians, if any, have grappled with the real difficulty. Some he will find asserting in apparently the most decisive fashion that sorrow from the fear of hell alone suffices with the sacrament, but they hasten to throw in the proviso that it must be accompanied by the "hope of pardon," by which they understand supreme love of concupiscence of God. Others there are who declare that fear of the pains of hell, if properly appreciated, is sufficient not only to restrain the sinner from the commission of the sinful act in future, but to wean his will from any desire to commit it; this turning away of the will from sin, however, they are compelled to regard as a conversion, at least inchoate, to God, and this is an act of love. Thus all find themselves in the end very much in the same position as the opponents with whom they contend so strenuously. We may pass on to review another phase of the question.

All theologians are agreed that attrition, from whatever motive it is elicited, must be supreme. Now, there are at least two obvious meanings in which the term 'supreme' may be understood. It may mean in the first place that mortal sin, being a complete and absolute separation from our last end, to which we are bound to tend with supreme love, must be hated as an infinite evil, an evil which robs us of our last end, and in this sense the absolute evil. But secondly, sorrow

may be supreme in a relative or qualified sense, in the sense merely that sin should be hated more than any evil which the non-commission of it entails. This is what theologians are accustomed to call sorrow that is supreme in appreciation, *contritio appretiative summa*, but the use of the adjective 'supreme,' *summus*, in this sense is entirely different to that in which it is employed elsewhere in theology. We speak of acts of the theological virtues being supreme, meaning thereby that they are directly centred in the Infinite, having for their formal object the infinite being under some special aspect. Thus, for example, the act of charity is supreme because it refers to the Infinite Good. Taking the word in the same sense here, we should be obliged to maintain that the act of supreme sorrow, or hatred of sin, should regard sin as an infinite evil; and if we followed the line of Suarez' reasoning, that love and hate proceed from the same principle and are in proportion, we should be forced to admit that hatred of sin must be in exact proportion to love of the opposite good—that is to say, that love of the infinite good, or charity, should be the motive which inspires true sorrow. And this is what the Catechism of the Council of Trent seems to mean when it says that "since God is to be loved above all things, that which alienates us from him is to be detested above all things." ¹⁷

To avoid the inconvenience of such a conclusion,

¹⁷ Donovan's transl., p. 265.

theologians have, in comparatively modern times, spoken of contrition which is supreme in appreciation as sufficient ; by which they mean that the sinner repents, hating his sin more than any evil which he might suffer by not committing it, and thus obviously the sufficiency of sorrow through fear of the pains of hell would be demonstrated. Such a sorrow, they say, is a practical, working sorrow, attainable by the ordinary man ; it destroys sin and the affection for sin ; hence it is sufficient with the sacrament.

It is unfortunate that the principle upon which this argument rests cannot be pushed to its logical conclusion. If it be once admitted that any motive which suffices to lead men away from sin will suffice to secure forgiveness, in conjunction with the Sacrament of Penance, why must we maintain that sorrow from a purely human motive would be inadequate ? For it cannot be denied that the consideration of the temporal evils brought upon him by his sins may efficaciously determine a person to repent their commission and to avoid them in the future. Yet we find no good support in theology for the view that sorrow for sin from a temporal motive is enough, for, we are told, such a motive is purely selfish, having no reference to God who is offended, and hence inadequate to retract the essential malice of the sin, which consists in the rejection of God. A reply, it may be observed, which is excellent as far as it goes, but which can be made to prove

much more. For if temporal evils cannot provide an adequate motive of sorrow, how does the pain of hell do so ? Is not fear of this pain, considered in itself, just as selfish as fear of the loss of health or property or social position which may be brought about by sin ? Where is the conversion to God, which, we have been told, is necessary for true sorrow ?

Some will attempt to answer by saying that such conversion is not indeed contained in the imperfect act of sorrow described, but is supplied in some way by the sacrament. Cardinal Billot, to take one of the most modern writers, puts forward the theory that the act of attrition conceived from the motive of fear of the pains of hell averts the sinner from his sins, but does not yet convert him to God. The sinner he likens to one who is prevented from reaching a desired point by being bound to a stake. The first essential is obviously to break the bonds which fasten him ; this done, he is prepared to reach his objective. In the same way, he argues, the sinner must first break the bonds which tie him to sin, before he can avail of the power of the sacrament to convert him to God. His act of attrition only breaks the chain of sin, but does not yet lead him to the opposite good.¹⁸ This would imply

¹⁸ The obstacle to be removed is adherence to sin ; and thus Billot argues :—“ Ast per solam attritionem excludentem voluntatem peccandi tollitur præfatum adhaerentiae impedimentum. Licet igitur, quantum est ex vi operis operantis, nondum sit factum satis ad destruendam offensam adhuc imputabiliter manentem, et nondum inveniatur homo conversus ad Deum ut ad ultimum totius humanæ vitæ finem,

a departure from the principle which we have seen applied by Suarez, that the acts of love and of hatred proceed from the same principle. And it is very hard to conceive how one could hate sin without loving God, if sin is to be taken as an offence against, and aversion from, God.¹⁹ Hence, other theologians regard sorrow from fear of the pains of hell as sufficient only if these pains are considered as inflicted by God for sin, but it is very doubtful if they can thus maintain the position which they undertake to defend. For it seems obvious that either this aspect is not considered by the sinner at all, or if it is, it implies, in addition to the fear alleged to be sufficient, some love of God who is offended by sin.

At the present time, the view which finds most favour, probably because it is the least exacting, is that which states that sorrow for sin from any supernatural motive is sufficient with the sacrament.²⁰ And it is generally assumed that no love of God is required,²¹ although it seems impossible to secure a definite and unequivocal expression of view on this point,

nihilominus ablatum est obstaculum prohibens ne sacramentum hanc conversionem in habitu operetur. In quo iuvare iterum potes exemplo in superioribus iam proposito. Nam si quis rumperet vinculum quo alligatus erat ad unum terminum, nondum quidem actu suo se converteret ad terminum oppositum; esset tamen in proxima dispositione requisita ad hoc ut per causam extrinsecam ab uno situ in contrarium immutaretur." *De Ecclesiae Sacramentis*, Tom. ii., p. 166 (4th Ed.)

¹⁹ Billot's theory seems to be only a revival, in different words, of the old conception embodied in the formula: *ex attrito fit contritus*. See p. 87.

²⁰ Cf. Hurter, *Compend. Theol. Dogm.*, Tom. iii., n. 473 (12th Ed.).

²¹ *Ibid.*, n. 476.

for the theologians finally brush it away as a matter of little practical importance. If, for example, says Hurter, we understand by the "beginning of love" that which is implicitly contained in attrition, inasmuch as this latter is a salutary act and a pious movement of the will; in that it proceeds from grace, removes the obstacle to the infusion of charity and comprises the resolve to keep the commandments, among which is that of loving God; and finally in that it implies hatred of sin and the hope of pardon—if this is what is understood by the "beginning of love," there is no attritionist who will not agree.²²

While, as has been said, this is the view which in our time can claim most adherents, that which requires some love of God, from the motive of charity, is not without a considerable number of influential supporters. Fr. Lehmkuhl is one of the most widely-known of recent theologians, and his opinions are deservedly regarded as worthy of the gravest consideration. Speaking of the "beginning of love" which is required by the Council of Trent, he mentions the view of those who consider that it refers to an act of hope, which for them is love of concupiscence of God; and to this view he is prepared to assign a measure of probability. But, arguing from the generally accepted usage of the word *diligere*, he contends that the decree of the Council, fairly

²² Ibid., n. 473, par. 3.

interpreted, requires from the penitent a love of charity, though not perfect or justifying love.²³ The possibility of such initial love before justification seems to present no difficulty to theologians. St. Thomas holds that before the infusion of the habit of charity, an act of the virtue sufficient to fulfil the precept of loving God may be elicited.²⁴ And we may recall that, according to Pallavicini, among the steps leading up to justification, the theologians at the Council of Trent wished to include, and did include, an act of charity.²⁵

²³ "At cum vox 'diligere' communius non illum concupiscentiae amorem, sed affectum, quo aliquis erga Deum in se moveatur, significet: etiam eiusmodi affectum in poenitentis dispositione quaerendum esse probabile est. Et sane tale affectum, qui ad speciem caritatis quidem pertineat, sed actus perfectus non sit, vid. non efficax in Deum ut in se dilectum absoluta et super omnia firma prosecutio atque voluntas, sed huius voluntatis *inchoatio* et in Deo complacentia, tale affectum dico exsistere posse nemo dubitare potest." *Theol. Mor.* ii., n. 391.

²⁴ "Sicut aliarum virtutum actus dupliciter considerari possunt, vel secundum quod sunt a virtute, vel secundum quod antecedunt virtutem; ita est etiam de caritate; potest enim aliquis, etiam caritatem non habens, diligere proximum et Deum, etiam super omnia, ut quidam dicunt: et hoc diligere intelligitur actus caritatis sub praecepto directe cadere, et non solum secundum quod a caritate procedit." *In II.*, Dist. 28, q. 1, a. 3, ad 2^m.

²⁵ Cf. Billuart, *De Poenit.*, Diss. iv., a. 7, § iii.; Billot, *De Eccl. Sacr.*, ii., p. 160; St. Alphonsus, *Theol. Mor.*, Lib. ii., Tract iii., n. 24 (where it is said that the desire to possess God is an object of charity).

NOTE TO CHAPTER VI.

As it may be convenient for the reader to have them before him, the extracts from Pallavicini's History of the Council of Trent (Latin transl.), frequently referred to in the preceding Chapter, are here appended.

A. Conc. Trid., Sess. vi., Cap. vi. (cf. Denz., n. 798)—Pallav., Lib. viii., Cap. xiii.

12. Subditur eodem Capite, homines eiusmodi timore fiduciaque excitatos, *Deum tamquam . . . agi oportet*. Consulto postrema verba sunt apposita, quo discrimen haberetur inter huiusmodi poenitentiam, et illam quae in peccatore post Baptismum exigitur, et de qua agitur Canone xiv.; et quae spectet ad Poenitentiae Sacramentum.

13. Quod attinet ad id quod dicitur de dilectione Dei, advertendum est, per tenorem decreti prius delineati nullam fieri dilectionis mentionem; sed Salvatorem Alepium Archiepiscopum Turritanum,

Claudium Iaium Societatis Iesu, Lipomanum Veronensis Adiutorem, et Pium Franciscanorum Praesidem, admonuisse, ut aliquis Charitatis actus insereretur: cumque id ad omnium Patrum iudicium relatum fuerat cum aliis praecipuis notis, ut indicavimus, viginti tres ex ipsis diserte illud comprobasse, adeoque insertum Decreto: sed postea aliis haud probatum; verum a Theologis strenue propugnatum, et per haec verba retentum: *Non est sermo eo loco de habitu Charitatis: Sed cum in particula, quae loquitur de Poenitentia, nulla fiat mentio amoris, visum est cum fide et spe iungere aliquem dilectionis actum; quia si poenitentia tota esset ex timore, sine amore iustitiae, et dolor esset propter poenam tantum, et non propter Dei offensam infructuosa esset.* Et in actis legitimis, servatis in Aeliae arce S. Angeli, ubi fit mentio de quodam Coetu Patrum Theologorum, haec leguntur: *Pariter propositum fuisse, an peccatorum detestatio in praeparatione spem praecedat; et post rem exactissime expensam, conclusum fuisse; Quantumvis aliqua peccatorum detestatio spem praecedat; tamen illam detestationem, quae ad iustificationem disponit (de qua in sexto Decreto capite dicitur) quoniam non potest fieri sine aliqua spe ac dilectione, postea sequi.*

B. Conc. Trid., Sess. vi., Cap. vii. (Denz. n. 799, 800)—Pallav., Lib. viii., Cap. xiii.

3. Quibus pariter animadvertentibus, Charitatem superiori capite memoratam, recenseri sub illius initium inter ea quae praeparant animum ad iustitiam suscipiendam, postea vero tamquam ipsius iustitiae formam poni; responderunt decreti formatores. In primo loco sermonem esse de quodam actu Charitatis, cum insit aliqua dilectio in homine, non quidem obtinente, sed exoptante iustitiam: at in secundo significari habitum Charitatis. Denique observare par est, mentem Concilii fuisse, statuere speciatim habitum infusum iustitiae, et non generatim meram interiorem iustitiam, nihil definiendo, ea ne sit actus an habitus, uti placuit Gabriel Vasquez. Quod exploratum mihi fit: quoniam quibusdam postulantibus, ut expressius declararetur, fieri iustitiam per habitum infusum, delecti Patres ad id responderunt. Id satis explicari per vocem *inhaeret*, quae stabilitatem significat, et habitibus non actibus congruit.

C. Conc. Trid., Sess. xiv., Cap. iv. (Denz. 897, 898)—Pallav., Lib. xii., Cap. x.

24. Didacus Lainius, . . . dixit: Sacramento esse necessaria poenitentiam, timorem, dilectionem, contritionem, absolutionem. Dilectionem pariter tamquam necessariam enumeravit Iacobus Ferrusius Hispanus, Segoviensis Episcopi Theologus, et per hoc eundem articulum improbavit causatus, solis terroribus minime contineri dilectionem, quae absolute necessaria est, cum Christus pronuntiaverit: *Remittuntur ei peccata multa, quoniam dilexit multum*; et *dilexit*, inquit, per praeteritum, quia dilectio remissionem antecessit. Et Apostolus: *Tristitia, quae est secundum Deum* (hoc est, interpretabatur Ferrusius, secundum Deum dilectum), *operatur poenitentiam in salutem.* Et caput 2 ad Romanos: *Benignitas Dei vos adducit ad poenitentiam.* Unde S. Aug. ait: *Absque amore gratia non datur.* Idcirco exigebat is ante omnia primam quandam, ut vocant, motionem in Deum, ad quam significandam ea SS. verba dicerentur: *Converte nos Dne ad te, et Ego sto ad ianuam, et pulso: Vos semper Sp. Sancto restitistis, et Extendi manum meam, et non fuit qui adspiceret.* Postea vero actum Fidei, unde scriptum erat: *Accedentem ad Deum oportet credere, et Sine fide impossibile est placere Deo:* Hinc oritur, aiebat ille, in homine peccatorum detestatio, assurgitque in spem animus, et amoris initium habetur; inde vero primam gratiam Deus infundit: qui tamen amor naturalis non est, sed a Divina gratia efficitur; tametsi naturalis amor ad id etiam conferat. Ita Ferrusius.

25. At Melchior Avosmedianus, tunc Pacensis Episcopi Theologus, postea vero, regressus ad Pii Concilium, Guadicensis Episcopus, dixit, Prius nos propter poenae metum dolere, dein propter Deum; postea vero, aiebat, peccata confitemur. Et Bernardus Colloredus Dominicanus, Foroliviensis Episcopi Theologus, tamquam necessaria numeravit timorem, detestationem, ac fidem, ex qua spes oriatur, et ab hac dilectio. Eiusdem sententiae fuit Franciscus Contreia ex Ord. Min. Observantium, et revera, quantum ex Actis Coniicio, Theologorum mens erat; ut error haereticorum damnaretur, tamquam inhonestum improbantium poenae timorem; non item ut ferrent sententiam de Scholastica quaestione, an huiusmodi timor, non solum absque Contritione animi perfecta (de quo controversia vix fuit, sicut patebit), sed etiam absque eo quod ullus excitetur amor imperfectus, sufficiat ad peccatorum remissionem in Sacramento. Id vero clare liquet ex ipsa probatione Concilii, qua huius articuli doctrinam firmat capite quarto; nimirum Ninivitarum poenitentiam ex timore profectam ipsis profuisse; cum certum esset eo tempore, quo Sacramentum Poenitentiae adhuc non extabat, eam formidolosam poenitentiam minime sufficisse per se ipsam ad peccatum delendum; sed vim tantummodo habuisse ad impetrandam novam gratiam, cuius ope adiceretur charitatis effectus, quem omnes necessarium fuisse fatentur ante novam legem ad iustitiam recipiendam.

26. In Patrum Conventu id pauci attigerunt. Aliquod dumtaxat vestigium comperio opinionis negantis necessitatem amoris, in iis quae Granatensis disputavit. At vero Ioannes Aemilianus, Hispaniensis Tudetanus Antistes, extremum oppositae sententiae tenuit: hoc est, opus esse contritione perfecta; nec tamen hinc argui, per Sacramentum peccata non remitti, quippe quae Sacramentum iam invenit remissa praeexistentis contritionis efficacitate: quidem, aiebat, ipsa contritio id praestat virtute Sacramenti, cuius votum in ea continetur.

Praeterea oportet scire, postea Decretis doctrinam complexis verba haec fuisse adiecta: *Illam Contritionem, quam T. T. Attritionem vocant, quod imperfecta sit, et solum vel ex turpitudinis peccati consideratione, vel ex gehennae et poenarum metu, qui servilis timor dicitur, concipiatur, si voluntatem peccandi excludat, et dolorem qualemcumque de commissis delictis exprimat, statuit haec Sancta Synodus, et declarat non solum non facere hominem hypocritam, et magis peccatorem (ut quidam blasphemare non verentur), verum etiam sufficere ad Sacramenti huius constitutionem, ac Donum Dei esse, et Sp. Sancti impulsu verissimum, non adhuc quidem inhabitantis, sed tantum moventis, quo poenitens adiutus, cum sine aliquo dilectionis in Deum motu esse vix queat, viam sibi ad iustitiam munit, et per eum ad Dei gratiam facilius impetrandam disponitur.* Sed laudatus Episcopus monuit, falso dici, huiusmodi dolorem sine amore vix umquam concipi posse: quod autem haec attritis satis esset Sacramento constituendo, ita ut homini attrito deleantur peccata Absolutionis supervenientis vi, variare auctorum sententias, adeoque id esse tollendum: quamobrem decretum, sicuti nunc extat, reformatum est, et prout a nobis referetur.

CHAPTER VII.

THE NATURE OF CHARITY.

IN the pages that precede we have been viewing the virtue of charity, as it were, in action, that is, we have been studying its relations with other portions of our theological system; and there can be little doubt that the most commonly accepted theory of the nature of the virtue is but ill-adjusted to the unquestionable facts in regard to its exercise in actual life. It remains for us to consider more in detail the theory to which we have been pointing all along—a theory, it is claimed, which harmonises admirably with facts.

For a definition of charity we need not go beyond the elementary Catechism, wherein it is said to be “a divine virtue by which we love God above all for his own sake, and our neighbour as ourselves for the love of God.” This is the virtue inculcated in the Old Testament and in the New, whose formal object, according to the theologians, is God as infinitely lovable for his own sake. Thus, as St. Thomas says, charity is the most perfect of all the virtues, inasmuch as it touches God more closely than any other. For “faith and hope appertain to God in so far as we acquire from him knowledge of truth or possession of good; but charity has to do with God so as to rest in him, not in order that any

advantage should be derived from him.”¹ The perfection of charity, then, consists in a union with God more intimate than is attainable by means of any other virtue, and this union is designated love of friendship.

The *absolute* goodness of God is said to be the formal object of charity, and in explaining what they mean by the term “absolute,” the theologians generally state that in love of charity one must consider God’s infinite goodness in itself, apart altogether from any relation of suitability or desirability for oneself. This conception is derived in the main from a previously accepted view of the formal object of divine hope, according to which this latter virtue consists, either wholly or in part, in love of concupiscence of the infinite good. Love of concupiscence is, of course, a relative love, love of an object regarded as desirable—“in quantum est nobis conveniens.” But St. Paul has declared that charity is greater than hope; hence love of charity must be of a higher order than love of hope, and, therefore, it must consider the infinite good apart altogether and abstracting from this aspect of suitability to us. Thus, for example, reasons Mazzella:—
 “Hope and charity are two really distinct virtues; therefore, they must have different formal objects, for it is these which specify the virtues. But the

¹ “Semper autem id quod est per se, maius est eo quod est per aliud. Fides autem et spes attingunt quidem Deum secundum quod ex ipso provenit nobis vel cognitio veri vel adeptio boni; sed caritas attingit ipsum Deum, ut in ipso sistat, non ut ex eo aliquid nobis proveniat.” *Summ. Theol.*, 22^{ae}, q. 23, a. 6.

relative goodness of God is the formal object of hope ; hence it cannot be the formal object of charity.”² And in vain will the reader search his pages for a more convincing reason than this, which, of course, falls utterly to the ground once a theory of divine hope be adopted which denies that this virtue consists in love of concupiscence.

The chief objection, however, to the view which is here impugned lies in the great danger which it involves, a danger to be avoided in any alternative scheme, of seeming to place the virtue of charity upon a lofty pedestal out of reach of the ordinary individual. From the teaching on attrition, according to which the penitent is relieved of the necessity of making an act of charity—the virtue being imposed upon him, as it were, by the sacrament—it might seem to follow that one can go through life without ever eliciting an act of love of God ; and the chief merit of attrition is declared to consist in its being an adequate substitute, with the sacrament, for the very difficult act of perfect love. But the positive obligation of eliciting such acts of perfect love very frequently during life has already been sufficiently dwelt on ; we may again call to mind the beautiful Chapter of St. Paul’s first Epistle to the Corinthians, in which the virtue is extolled as the be-all and the end-all of human endeavour.

² “ Spes et caritas sunt duae virtutes realiter inter se distinctae ; ergo debent habere diversum formale obiectum ; ab hoc enim virtutes specificantur ; sed bonitas Dei respectiva est obiectum formale spei ; ergo nequit esse obiectum formale caritatis.” *De Virt. Inf.*, n. 1264.

It is altogether plain, therefore, that a virtue which figures so largely and so essentially in the economy of the Christian life must be easy of fulfilment for anyone who willingly avails of the aids of divine grace. Now, the metaphysical process involved in abstracting from God's desirability for ourselves, if we wish to elicit an act of charity, is certainly not one which the illiterate, the young, or the mentally deficient could easily go through. And in point of fact our theologians do not insist on their attempting it. We have already seen that, when treating of contrition and attrition, writers are much more lenient in their demands than when they are discussing in scientific fashion the nature of the act of charity, from which we may with justice conclude that the science which is so divorced from life can have scant claim on our consideration.

Hence it is no wonder that the tendency observable in case of such writers as Ballerini and Schiffini is to regard charity as an act of the love of God considered as *our* supreme good and final happiness, equating it with what is usually called love of concupiscence ; for this is a tangible object, within the reach of every individual, comparatively easy of attainment. And the testimony of Sacred Scripture is invoked in its favour. The Psalms are full of passages expressing the desire of the singer to enjoy the possession of God, as the highest form of love. "As the hart panteth after the fountains of

water, so my soul panteth after thee, O God. My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God ; when shall I come and appear before the face of God.”³ Likewise in the New Testament : “ I am straitened between two : having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ.”⁴ “ Let us therefore love God, because God hath first loved us.”⁵ Such is love of charity as understood by the great Saints and ascetic writers of all times, among whom are pre-eminent St. Augustine and St. Bonaventure.⁶ And it is pointed out that the theologians who nominally require “ absolute ” love of God are in reality supporters of the view which they are at such pains to condemn.⁷

It is not by any means necessary, however, to discontinue describing charity as absolute love of God, if we only understand the term “ absolute ” in another sense. The word is also employed by philosophers, in the sphere of good, in connexion with the relation of ends and means. The end pursued is spoken of as the *absolute* good ; the means employed in pursuit of it, *relative* good, for means are good only as leading to an end.⁸

³ Ps. xli., 2, 3.

⁴ Philipp. i., 23.

⁵ I. John iv., 19.

⁶ Cf. “ Hoc est Deum gratis amare, de Deo Deum sperare, de Deo properare impleri, de ipso satiari. Ipse enim sufficit tibi . . . Ipse sit nobis quicquid hic sine illo desideramus.” (St. Aug., *Serm.* 334) ; and the beautiful prayer of St. Bonaventure, found in the Breviary at the thanksgiving after Mass : “ Transfige . . . medullas et viscera animae meae suavissimo ac saluberrimo amoris tui vulnere, vera serenaque et apostolica sanctissima caritate, ut langueat et liquefiat anima mea solo semper amore et desiderio tui ; te concupiscat, et deficiat in atria tua, cupiat dissolvi et esse tecum, etc.”

⁷ Cf. Hurter, *Comp. Theol. Dogm.*, Tom. iii., *De Poenit.*, n. 468.

⁸ “ Les fins qui sont aux moyens ce que les principes sont aux conclusions, représentent également l’absolu, tandis que les moyens, qui sont bons de la bonté de la fin, sont relatifs et dépendants.” *Dict. de Théol. Cath.*, Tom. i., Col. 134, s.v. *Absolu*.

Thus the scientist who desires to make a chemical analysis will adopt the means essential to attain this end, in procuring the requisite materials and setting up the necessary apparatus ; but these things he regards only as preliminaries, of importance to him merely as leading up to the end he desires, and embraced by his will only with a view to that end. In like manner the sick man will take the medicines prescribed by his doctor, not indeed for any pleasure the medicines give him, but because the taking of them is necessary in order to recover health. In these cases the ends in view—the chemical analysis, the recovery of health—are said to be loved absolutely; the means to the end—the preparation of the materials, the taking of medicine—are loved relatively. We might go further, regarding the ends of the previous examples as means to further ends ; in the case of the chemist, he may desire to utilise the knowledge derived from his experiment in devising some mechanical contrivance ; the sick man may be anxious to regain health only in order to be able to execute important work, and so on. But one cannot proceed indefinitely in the matter of ends, and for all actions there must be one ultimate end. The end of human existence is the enjoyment of God for ever, and all are bound to direct their actions thereto, if they would have them to be requited by God hereafter. God is, therefore, the last end towards which man

directs his strivings, and in this simple and obvious sense he is called the "absolute" good—that is to say, he is not to be taken as a means to any further good or end, but is himself the ultimate end, the desire for which is necessarily the desire for the absolute good.

The idea of the absolute good, therefore, is not to be conceived as arrived at by any process of abstraction which prescind from God's infinite desirability for his creatures—else it would be so difficult of attainment, if at all possible, that the ordinary man could not encompass it. God is rather to be conceived as the supreme good and infinite perfection, the attainment of which is the final end of action. It is in this sense that St. Thomas always declares charity to be perfect love of God. Never once will the Angelic Doctor be found to speak of *absolute* love, as subsequently understood by so many theologians, but he uniformly alludes to the virtue as love of the last end. We need only recall what has been said in a previous chapter regarding the essential malice of mortal sin—that it consists in an aversion from our last end, that it is the direct opposite of divine charity—to realize that this is the true interpretation of the words of St. Thomas.⁹ And explicitly he writes: "Love of charity tends to God as the principle of beatitude,

⁹ Cf. "In peccato mortali anima per amorem contingit rem temporalem quasi finem, et per hoc totaliter impeditur influxus splendoris gratiae, qui provenit in eos qui Deo adhaerent ut ultimo fini per caritatem." 12^{ae}, q. 89, a. 1, ad 3^m.

in the communication of which is based the friendship of charity.”¹⁰ And again: “Charity tends to the last end under the precise aspect of last end.”¹¹ Inquiring subsequently with regard to the love of self and the neighbour from the motive of charity, St. Thomas expresses the same idea: “God is loved as the principle of good, on which is based love of charity; man loves himself with love of charity in so far as he shares in that good; the neighbour is so loved in so far as he is associated with that good.”¹² Thus it is the aspect of final good which appeals in love of charity. In reply to the question “whether it is fitting that there should be a commandment to love God with our whole heart,” it is said that “God is to be loved as our last end, to which all things must be referred; and hence in the commandment of love the idea of completeness had to be indicated.”¹³ It is interesting to compare St. Thomas’ interpretation of the great commandment with that of some modern theologians.¹⁴

Thus it may be said that love of charity is at once absolute and relative; absolute, inasmuch as it regards God as the ultimate end; relative,

¹⁰ “Dilectio caritatis tendit in Deum sicut in principium beatitudinis, in cuius communicatione amicitia caritatis fundatur.” 22^{ae}, q. 26, a. 1.

¹¹ “Caritas tendit in ultimum finem sub ratione finis ultimi.” Ibid., ad. 1^m.

¹² “Deus diligitur ut principium boni, super quo fundatur dilectio caritatis; homo autem seipsum diligit ex caritate secundum rationem qua est particeps praedicti boni; proximus autem diligitur secundum rationem societatis in isto bono.” 22^{ae}, q. 26, a. 4.

¹³ “Deus autem est diligendus sicut finis ultimus, ad quem omnia sunt referenda. Et ideo totalitas quaedam fuit designanda, circa praeceptum de dilectione Dei.” 22^{ae}, q. 44, a. 4.

¹⁴ Cf. Mazzella, *De Virt. Inf.*, n. 1259.

in that it implies that this end is the perfection of the creature who loves. It would be difficult to secure approval for this view from those writers who are accustomed to define hope in terms of love of concupiscence, and yet we find them ultimately adopting it themselves. For example, Cardinal Billot argues that charity, being perfect love, must be purified from all motives of self-interest, and must, therefore, be superior to hope, which is love of concupiscence, by which we do not love God more than ourselves. And the absolute love of God, which is the formal object of charity, he explains to be love of God as our supernatural end, under which aspect he communicates himself to us in divine beatitude. And St. Thomas is quoted to this effect: "Wherever there is a special aspect of good there is a special reason for love. But the *bonum divinum* considered as the object of beatitude has a special aspect of good, and hence love of charity, which is love of this good, is a special kind of love."¹⁵

Theologians are much exercised in explaining such passages in the works of St. Thomas as that

¹⁵ Bonitas Dei qua est in seipso bonus, dupliciter consideratur: vel ut finis naturalis . . . vel ut finis supernaturalis, id est sub ea ratione sub qua in divina beatitudine sese communicat. Statim autem apparet quod caritas, utpote amor amicitiae ad Deum, hoc altero modo respicit bonum divinum, videlicet secundum quod est commune bonum beatae civitatis coelestis Ierusalem . . . Unde S. Thomas, 22^{ae}, q. 23, a. 4: "Actus et habitus specificantur per obiecta. Proprium autem obiectum amoris est bonum, et ideo ubi est specialis ratio boni, ibi est specialis ratio amoris. Bonum autem divinum in quantum est beatitudinis obiectum, habet specialem rationem boni, et ideo amor caritatis qui est amor huius boni, est specialis amor." *De Virt. Inf.*, p. 396.

which has been just quoted, according to which charity considers God as the object of beatitude.¹⁶ For if St. Thomas can be cited as saying that hope regards God as "the ultimate and final cause, expecting beatitude in the enjoyment of him,"¹⁷ and that "hope tends to God as the final good to be attained,"¹⁸ how are we to distinguish it from charity, which also, according to St. Thomas, regards God as the final end to be attained? Cardinal Billot comes to our aid with the old familiar distinction, telling us that hope has to do with the last end in a relative sense, viewing it as desirable for us, while charity considers the same last end "transcendentally," as lovable on its own account, to which we must refer ourselves for our final happiness.¹⁹ And it may reasonably be asked what meaning can be attached to what is called considering the last end transcendentally. If I do not regard it as *my* last end, to be pursued and achieved as *my* final happiness, how otherwise

¹⁶ Cf. also 12^{ae}, q. 65, a. 5, ad 1^m; q. 114, a. 4; *Quaest. Disp. De Spe.*, a. 1, ad 9^m.

¹⁷ "Spes habet rationem virtutis ex hoc quod attingit supremam regulam humanorum actuum: quam attingit et sicut primam causam efficientem, in quantum eius auxilio innititur; et sicut ultimam causam finalem, in quantum in eius fruitione beatitudinem expectat." 22^{ae}, q. 17, a. 5. No better example could be adduced of the unsettled teaching of St. Thomas on the nature of hope.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, a. 6, ad 3^m.

¹⁹ "Ultimus finis accipitur tum in genere boni relativi quod unusquisque sibi concupiscit, tum in consideratione transcendentis, ut finis cuius gratia sunt omnia, quique propter se super omnia est diligendus, et ad quem nosmetipsos referre debemus cum omni perfectione et beatitudine nostra. Porro in primo modo attenditur ratio ultimi finis secundum quid, in posteriori autem simpliciter; et primus modus pertinet ad obiectum spei, posterior vero ad obiectum caritatis." *De Virt. Inf.*, p. 364.

am I to conceive it? If it is to be described as the end for which all things exist, it follows that the completion of *my* being lies in the realization of it, and that, therefore, it is my business to attain it. It is impossible to conceive an end apart from conceiving it as desirable, as good for one, as adding to one's perfection; and if it be pursued as such, what can be required more?

It is a strange thing to find theologians extolling love of concupiscence when they are treating of the virtue of hope, contending vigorously that it is not really a love of self; but when they come to describe the nature of charity, they urge that it is superior to hope in that the selfish element of the latter is eliminated. Hope is selfish now; a little while since, it was not selfish. Thus it seems altogether impossible to reconcile the teaching of Billot in these two places. Putting to himself the objection based on the dictum of St. Augustine, that all sin consists in "using what should be enjoyed, and enjoying what should be used," that is, in regarding ends as means, and *vice versa*, he hastens to deny that love of concupiscence of God implies the subordination of the infinite good to the pleasure or satisfaction of the creature. "Perish the thought," he energetically declares, "that anyone who loves God with love of concupiscence should intend to enjoy a thing towards which God is a means; what he really wishes to enjoy is the supremely

good God himself.”²⁰ And continuing to explain in what sense it may be admitted that love of concupiscence is for our own sake, *propter nos*, and in what sense it may not, he concludes: “Such love of God (*i.e.*, love of concupiscence) is not referring God to us, but, on the contrary, referring ourselves to God, as imperfect and needy creatures to the supreme good in which is our beatitude.”²¹

Bear in mind that these words are employed by our author in reference to what he calls love of hope or concupiscence, and the reader may well ask what other terms might be used to describe the virtue of charity. It would be easy to parallel this description of hope with practically word-for-word passages from St. Thomas referring to charity. We have already seen that the Angelic Doctor regards all reference to God as made by charity, and how he has also described charity as the virtue which regards God as the object of beatitude.²²

Passing on to our author’s treatise on charity, as the final argument for the thesis that this virtue regards God as the absolute good, we read the following words: “There must be some theological virtue which refers to God under the

²⁰ “Absit omnino ut qui amore concupiscentiae amat Deum, intendat frui aliquo ad quod Deus se haberet ut medium, sed nullo alio frui vult quam ipso summo bono Deo.” *De Virt. Inf.*, p. 390.

²¹ “Sic autem amare Deum non est ordinare Deum ad nos, sed est econtra ordinare nos ad Deum, tamquam entia imperfecta et indiga ad summum illud bonum in quo est nostra beatitudo.” *Op. cit.* p. 371.

²² Cf. *supra*, pp. 121, 122.

aspect of the last end or supreme good to be loved above all things, to the glory of which everything must be referred. Now, this virtue is not faith, which considers God under the aspect of the true. Nor is it hope, which, although it refers to him under the aspect of good, nevertheless does not do so under the aspect of absolute good, *and does not imply that we love God more than ourselves*. There is, therefore, no virtue except charity which regards God as the last end in an unqualified sense.”²³ Observe that here the author is obliged to concede that love of hope or concupiscence is fundamentally love of self, in order to establish the superiority of charity ; while a few pages back, when engaged explicitly upon the virtue of hope, he rejected the notion in summary fashion. Hence it seems altogether impossible to maintain that there are two theological virtues of love of God—one supreme relative love, the other supreme absolute love. Nothing more is required of man than that he love God with supreme love, with his whole heart. If the act is supreme, it is enough ; if it is not supreme, it is no longer a theological virtue.

In holding that love of concupiscence is the highest form of divine love, it is almost impossible

²³ “ Denique oportet ut sit aliqua virtus theologica attingens Deum sub ratione finis ultimi, seu boni supremi super omnia diligendi, ad quod scilicet glorificandum cuncta referantur. Haec autem virtus non est fides quae attingit Deum sub ratione veri. Neque etiam spes, quae etsi attingat ipsum sub ratione boni, non tamen boni absoluti, et nondum importat amorem quo Deum plus quam nosmetipsos diligimus. Nulla igitur virtus est praeter caritatem, respiciens Deum ut finem simpliciter ultimum.” *Op. cit.*, p. 395-6.

to avoid being misunderstood while theologians continue to use the expression 'love of concupiscence' in different senses to suit the need of the moment, at one time asserting that it is fundamentally selfish, at another denying this. It seems unfortunate that the distinction between love of friendship and love of concupiscence was ever employed to indicate the difference between charity and hope, for it is hard to see how one can maintain that hope is a theological virtue if it consists in love of concupiscence as explained, for example, by St. Thomas in such a typical passage as the following: "Not every kind of love has the character of friendship, but only that which exists with benevolence For if we do not wish well to the things we love, but only wish their goodness for ourselves, as we love wine or a horse, we have not love of friendship, but love of concupiscence But not even benevolence suffices for friendship; in addition the love must be mutual . . . Such mutual benevolence is based on some communication. Now, as there is a certain communication between man and God, in so far as he imparts his beatitude to us, it must needs be that some friendship be founded on this The love founded on this communication is charity."²⁴ Now, if love of

²⁴ "Non quilibet amor habet rationem amicitiae, sed amor qui est cum benevolentia, quando scilicet sic amamus aliquem ut ei bonum velimus. Si autem rebus amatis non bonum velimus, sicut dicimur amare vinum, aut equum, aut aliquid huiusmodi, non est amor amicitiae, sed cuiusdam concupiscentiae. Ridiculum enim est dicere quod aliquis habeat amicitiam ad vinum vel ad equum. Sed nec

concupiscence be such as is here described, "as we love wine or a horse, wishing their goodness for ourselves," subordinating the things we love to our own satisfaction, how could it be ever denominated a theological virtue? Obviously the expression is capable of bearing another meaning.

While love of friendship is said to be the highest form of love attainable, being purified, it is contended, of self-interest, it must be borne in mind that the complete elimination of self-interest is altogether impossible. This is clear from the condemnation of the modified Quietism advocated by Fenelon. Inspired by the sincerest desire to attain the highest possible summit of perfection, but basing his teaching on the erroneous principles of mysticism advocated by Molinos, the saintly Archbishop of Cambrai put forward a theory of the love of God which utterly eliminated all interested motives. Among the propositions extracted from his work "*Explications des Maximes des Saints sur la Vie Interieure*," and condemned in the Brief "Cum alias" in 1699, the first in order reads: "There is a habitual state of love of God which is pure charity without any admixture of the motive of self-interest. Neither fear of punishment nor desire for rewards

benevolentia sufficit ad rationem amicitiae, sed requiritur quaedam mutua amatio, quia amicus est amico amicus. Talis autem mutua benevolentia fundatur super aliqua communicatione. Cum ergo sit aliqua communicatio hominis ad Deum, secundum quod nobis suam beatitudinem communicat, super hanc communicationem oportet aliquam amicitiam fundari . . . Amor autem super hanc communicationem fundatus est caritas." 22^{ae}, q. 23, a. 1.

have any further part in it. God is no longer loved for the sake of merit, or perfection, or for the happiness to be found in loving.”²⁵ Hence, love of charity cannot be conceived to exist without some admixture of the motive of self-interest, and cannot abstract from consideration of the fear of punishment, the desire for reward, and the happiness to be experienced in the act of loving. The ‘pure’ love espoused by Fenelon would approach dangerously near the Quietism of Molinos, which denied the necessity of practising the virtues, and even advocated a position of mere passivity in temptation, neither resisting nor consenting to it, but allowing it to take its course. Such a system would put an end to the idea of struggle in the Christian life.

Love of concupiscence, interested love, self-love, all these expressions seem almost inevitably to have a mercenary aspect, and there is no doubt that they very often bear a grosser meaning. Yet it is well to remember that self-love, when correctly motivated and ordinate, is not only a virtue, but the highest virtue of all; for there is no true love of self where there is not perfect love of God as the last end and supreme good. The so-called self-love which urges the performance of acts which avert from our last end

²⁵ “Datur habitualis status amoris Dei, qui est caritas pura et sine ulla admixtione motivi proprii interesse. Neque timor poenarum, neque desiderium remunerationum habent amplius in eo partem. Non amatur amplius Deus propter meritum, neque propter perfectionem, neque propter felicitatem in eo amando inveniendam.” Denz., n. 1327.

is ultimately a hatred of our supreme interests. Love of self and love of God are inseparably merged in one another. It is in the light of such considerations that we must understand the well-known text from the Epistle to the Hebrews : "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and is a rewarder to them that seek him,"²⁶ in which, it would appear, is contained a summary of Christian obligations, comprised in the two duties of belief in the existence of God, and in the fact that he is a rewarder of those who do his will. There is here no word of abstractive love of the absolute good in itself apart from our own final good.

Charity is love of God as infinitely good. Now, if we take up any text-book of philosophy we shall find that good is defined in terms of suitability. "The good is that which is suited to the nature of a thing"—*Bonum est id quod est conveniens alicuius naturae*. Goodness implies a relation ; a thing must be good *for* something else. If it were possible to apprehend a thing as good without at the same time apprehending it as suitable, the will could not be impelled towards it by love.²⁷ Rightly, therefore, Lehmkuhl says that "every act of the will, and hence also love of charity, tends to that which is

²⁶ Hebr. xi., 6.

²⁷ "Considerandum quod obiectum movens voluntatem est bonum conveniens apprehensum. Unde si aliquid bonum proponatur, quod apprehendatur in ratione boni, non autem in ratione convenientis, non movebit voluntatem." St. Thomas, *De Malo*, q. 6, a. 1.

suitable for the agent and perfects him, and under this aspect of suitability the agent is impelled towards it; for this is the concept of good itself, and the sole reason why the will can be affected with regard to a thing, and desire it.”²⁸

Much of the difficulty in connexion with the present matter would disappear if there was a single well-defined meaning attached to the terms employed. Love of concupiscence, love of benevolence, and love of friendship are spoken of as representing an ascending gradation in the act of love. Attention has already been drawn to the varying sense of the first of these expressions. It may not be amiss to make a brief reference to the usage of the latter two, although the point is not really very considerable. Charity is love of friendship. In addition to benevolence, according to St. Thomas, love of friendship implies reciprocation; it implies a communion of loves, and the knowledge on both sides that the love is mutual. Now, when God is its object, love of benevolence is said to be supreme, but it is not yet reciprocated. How can this be? If a creature loves God, God will most certainly love him in return. And the creature cannot ascend higher than benevolence; the rest is with God. Hence it is strange to find Billuart, a close follower

²⁸ “Omnis quidem actus voluntatis, adeoque etiam amor caritatis fertur in id, quod volenti convenit eumque perficit, atque sub hac ratione, qua volenti est conveniens, in illud fertur: iste enim est conceptum ipsius boni, quae sola est ratio, qua voluntas circa aliquid affici idque appetere possit.” *Theol. Mor.*, i., n. 441.

of St. Thomas, laying such stress on the distinction as to make it the basis of the difference between contrition and attrition. If attrition is love of benevolence of God, there is no higher love attainable for the creature. He has done all that is in his power to do, and he has only to await the crowning of his love by God's acceptance of it.²⁹ Even Billuart himself is inclined to admit this, when he assigns probability to the view that attrition from the motive of benevolence is sufficient to remit sin without the sacrament in case of necessity.³⁰ And St. Thomas declares that the precept of charity is sufficiently fulfilled by supreme love of benevolence.³¹ Yet, love of benevolence, if we are to accept the assurance of Billuart, is far removed from love of charity.

It has been remarked already that, as regards the nature of charity, theory and practice will not be found in perfect harmony. A further instance, in conclusion, will make this more evident still. It is a commonplace that under the Old Law grave sin was not remitted unless the sinner repented from the motive of charity or absolute love of God ; thus is thrown into greater relief the merciful dispensation of the New, which provided that sorrow from a lesser motive will suffice in conjunction with the sacrament ; and thus, too, the idea is strengthened, even though

²⁹ Cf. 22nd, q. 27, a. 2.

³⁰ *De Poenit.*, Diss iv., Art. iii., § ii.

³¹ In. II., Dist. 28, q. 1, a. 3.

it be not intended, that perfect charity is difficult of attainment. But an obvious objection is immediately suggested. If charity is so difficult as it is supposed to be, what a slender opportunity had the Jews of being saved ! What little chance have non-Catholics even now ! What becomes of the doctrine, to which we so tenaciously cling, that God sincerely wishes the salvation of all men ? This is not the place to examine the content and implications of that doctrine, but, at all events, it must be kept in mind when we treat of any act which is necessary for salvation by a necessity of means. Now, it is admitted on all sides that love of God is absolutely essential for salvation, and if it be not within the reasonable capacity of the conscientious pagan, as well as of the Christian and the Jew, the efficacy of God's will to save could be seriously questioned.

On this account it is not surprising to find some theologians inclined to abandon, almost against their will, the principle that love of charity, as understood by them, was necessary to secure forgiveness of grave sin in the Old dispensation, and without the sacrament in the New. Suarez tells us that he once favoured the view that sorrow for sin which proceeds from the motive of justice is sufficient,³² and this view he continued to regard as probable. But in modern times the conclusion has been forcing itself upon many that love of God, not as good in himself, but as

³² *De Poenit.*, Disp. iv., Sect. ii., n. 13.

our good, or because he has been good to us, that is to say, love of concupiscence or gratitude, is sufficient of itself. Tanquerey, who will be regarded as a representative modern theologian, puts forward this as the view of Lugo, Hurter, Palmieri, and Egger, and he concludes: "Hence we consider that this opinion is admirably consistent with the divine mercy, and if it be accepted, it will be much easier to understand how the Jews could have been justified without the sacrament, and also how non-Catholics who are in good faith can obtain pardon for their sins; for it is much easier to elicit an act of love from the motive of gratitude or hope, than on account of the divine goodness considered in itself. However, this opinion is not common, and in practice an endeavour should be made to rise from love of hope or gratitude to love of charity."³³ Much more decisive is Hurter. Inquiring what kind of charity is required for perfect contrition, he replies that all theologians demand love of friendship and benevolence, but they disagree as to the motive by which it must be inspired.

³³ "Nonnulli theologi, ut Lugo, Hurter, Palmieri, Egger ut probabile docent contritionem quae procedit ex *amore spei et gratitudinis*, vi cuius Deum diligimus propter infinita eius beneficia, esse perfectam et ad iustificationem, absque reali sacramenti susceptione, sufficere. Revera talis amor ut nobilissimus a SS. commendatur . . . Unde censemus hanc opinionem esse misericordiae divinae valde consentaneam; eaque admissa, multo melius intelligitur quomodo Iudaei, qui dura cervice erant, iustificari potuerint, absque sacramento, pariter quomodo A catholici, qui in bona vice versantur, veniam peccatorum suorum obtinere valeant: multo enim facilius elicitur amoris actus ex gratitudine et spe, quam ex divina bonitate in se spectata. Haec tamen opinio non est communis, et in praxi conandum est ex amore spei et gratitudinis ad amorem caritatis ascendere." *Synopsis Theol. Dogm., De Poenit.*, n. 58.

Some insist that God must be loved on account of his absolute goodness, and not merely for his relative goodness or in so far as he is *our* supreme good. "Others, however, there are," he goes on, "who contend that love is perfect, and therefore justifies without the sacrament, whenever God is loved on his own account, and therefore for a motive or reason indistinct from God. But if God is loved as *our* supreme good and happiness, or because of his relative goodness, the motive or reason of love is a perfection indistinct from God ; for God in himself is our supreme good, or relative goodness. Hence, if God is loved for this reason, he is loved for himself."³⁴ Such is surely the love required by the inspired writer when he says that "he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and is a rewarder to them that seek him," a love which is not above the ordinary capabilities of any man with the aid of ordinary grace, and which, therefore, we may venture to presume, is the maximum demanded by the all-good and merciful God, who does not require the impossible, but whose "commandments are not heavy,"³⁵ whose yoke is sweet and whose burden is light.³⁶

³⁴ "Non tamen desunt alii theologi, qui contendunt, toties amorem esse perfectum, ideoque iustificantem extra sacramentum, quoties Deus amatur propter semetipsum, ideoque propter motivum seu rationem indistinctam a Deo. Atqui si Deus amatur ut summum bonum et beatitudo nostra seu propter bonitatem respectivam motivum seu ratio amandi est perfectio indistincta a Deo : nam Deus per semetipsum est summum bonum nostrum seu bonitas relativa. Ergo si propter eam amatur Deus, amatur propter se." *Theol. Dogm. Compend., De Poenit.*, n. 468.

³⁵ I. John, v., 3.

³⁶ Matth., xi., 30.

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